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COACHES GONE WILD

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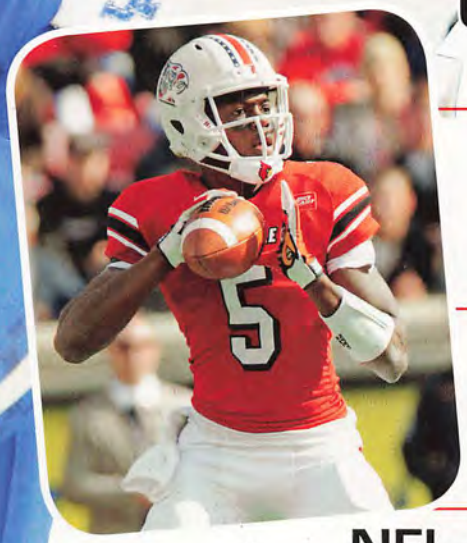

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Letter from the Publisher

Coaches Gone Wild is the title of the lead feature in our regional issues this year. Dennis Dodd takes an insider's look at the trials and tribulations of several of the game's top coaches beginning on page 18.

Scoping the Nation beginning on page 44 — written by *Lindy's* senior editor Anthony Gimino — tells you about all the coaching changes in college football this year. Anthony also tells who is on the proverbial "hot seat" on page 23.

Lindy's added a new Mountain West Preview last year and this year has added preseason team issues for Alabama, Michigan, Notre Dame, Ohio State and Texas. You can order them from our website or they will be on the newsstands in those respective states.

Lindy's will also be launching a new and improved website on Aug. 1st of this year. It will feature daily updates and great information to enhance the *Lindy's* brand online. We hope you check it out!

I hope your favorite team has a terrific year. As always, your comments are appreciated.

Sincerely,

Lindy Davis Jr.

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NATIONAL PICKS

Ready to Stick the Landing

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1. LSU

LSU did everything except stick the landing last season. The Tigers, kings of the comebacks and lords of one of the finest college football seasons ever for 13 games, had to swallow a goose-egg omelet, eagerly fed by league rival Alabama. Too bad it was in the BCS Championship Game.

Talk about all the motivation they need for this season. "Fire back" mode describes LSU perfectly after the sting of the title game.

No one doubts the Tigers' ammunition. The big boys on both sides of the line are nasty and among the nation's finest — the best way to be when setting out to hunt down the national championship. Size, speed and athleticism fill the roster — just your typical SEC championship team — plus these Tigers are led by a Honey Badger loaded for bear.

THE GOOD NEWS: LSU has a quarterback. Zach Mettenberger, who began his career at Georgia before being dismissed for legal issues, will do what Jordan Jefferson couldn't in the national title game: Stand and deliver. Coach Les Miles won't veer from loving on his punishing ground game — a four-headed backfield is a year older and better — but Mettenberger creates the needed balance. CB Tyrann Mathieu returns to make plays everywhere all the time, while defensive ends Sam Montgomery and Barkevious Mingo are lightning bolts off the edge and can't be successfully double-teamed at once.

THE BAD NEWS: The Tigers lost Thorpe Award-Winning cornerback Morris Claiborne early to the NFL Draft, and receiver Rueben Randle and defensive tackle Michael Brockers also took an early train out of Baton Rouge. LSU fans don't want to think too hard about who's next if Mettenberger goes down ... or just isn't up to the task. As with last year, the Tigers will have to earn every inch of their No. 1 ranking with road games at Auburn, Florida, Texas A&M and Arkansas.

OUR CALL: It's insanity to bet against the SEC winning its seventh consecutive national title. LSU gets Alabama in Baton Rouge for what should be the defining game of the college season. No team in the country looks better in its uniforms than LSU, and this time when the Tigers run out the clock at the end of the season, it will be to celebrate their third national championship in 10 years.

2. USC

Talented roster returns to glory

Matt Barkley confounded the draftniks and disappointed the rest of the Pac-12 by staying for his senior season, just like Matt Leinart did for the Trojans in 2005. Coach Lane Kiffin will forever be in Barkley's debt as the 37-year-old coach now sees his career really taking off after whatever that was with the Oakland Raiders, a false start at Tennessee, and two years of a postseason ban at USC.

THE GOOD NEWS: Barkley has the best receiver in the country in Robert Woods, and if Woods isn't No. 1, Marqise Lee might be. Multiple All-Americans dot the lineup, just like the Pete Carroll days. USC gets Oregon in the L.A. Coliseum, probably twice (once in the regular season, once in Pac-12 title game).

THE BAD NEWS: USC has 10 fewer scholarship players than most teams, capped at 75 this season as NCAA sanctions kick in. Depth is a concern virtually everywhere and trucking through to a 13-0 haul will require injury blessings from the football gods.

OUR CALL: The Trojans re-turned a corner last season by winning at Oregon in mid-November and are hitting the accelerator back to the glory days. The offense will be flat-out unstoppable ... a nice contrast, wouldn't you say, to LSU's defense in January?

3. Alabama

Restocking ... repeating not out of the question

The easy way to get another national championship trophy is to spend $30,000 on a new Waterford crystal football to replace the one that was shattered when a player's parent accidentally knocked it off its perch in the spring. The hard way is to earn it on the field after losing half of your starters on offense and defense, including Heisman finalist running back Trent Richardson, while trying to steer through the swamps of the SEC West — and win in Baton Rouge.

THE GOOD NEWS: Alabama's offensive line is the best in the country; QB AJ McCarron manages the game beautifully; and another star (or two) will emerge at running back. Nick Saban has recruited and evaluated better than anyone in the past five years.

THE BAD NEWS: The Tide is still crazy-talented on defense, but it takes experience to run the defense as Saban wants, and that's what Alabama lacks in places. There's no telling when the next shank, yank, or worm-burner is going to come in the kicking game.

OUR CALL: The Tide will play hearty defense, run the ball, gain field position through special teams, and not turn it over. It will work. Again. We have them No. 3 ... so we're seeing only one L — at LSU.

4. Oklahoma

Bouncing back is Sooners' strong suit

It wasn't just the injuries. It wasn't just the late-season flameout. It wasn't just booting a chance at an eighth conference title in 13 seasons under Bob Stoops. It was that Oklahoma State capitalized on it all to win its first Big 12 championship. You can bet 2011 isn't sitting lightly in the OU craw. How do we know? Following seasons in which the Sooners haven't won a conference title under Stoops, they are 50-8.

THE GOOD NEWS: QB Landry Jones, who slumped in the second half of the season, is recommitted, having spent part of spring practice studying under quarterback guru George Whitfield Jr. in California. Four offensive line starters return from a unit that gave up only 11 sacks on 583 throws.

THE BAD NEWS: Jones must thrive without WR Ryan Broyles, whose late-season injury was costly. Backup QB Blake "Belldozer" Bell is a Wildcat wild card, but how will that all play out? The defense, while talented, wasn't particularly physical last season.

OUR CALL: The record-setting Jones will rebound in a big way. So will RB Dominique Whaley, a walk-on who was poised to lead the team in rushing before being injured. A national title might be possible if OU can win at West Virginia and TCU in the final three weeks.

5. Oregon

Flying as high as a kite

The Ducks came out ahead in offseason transactions, with quarterback Darron Thomas making the dubious decision to leave early for the NFL, while coach Chip Kelly kept his feet on the ground in Eugene after flirting with the Tampa Bay Buccaneers. Replacing Thomas, while unexpected, is relatively easy — plug in Bryan Bennett or Marcus Mariota. Kelly is proving to be one of a kind, going 36-6 in three seasons with three conference titles and one national title game appearance.

THE GOOD NEWS: Running back Kenjon Barner is still fast. Running back/receiver/returner De'Anthony Thomas is a rocket booster in Nikes. Offense? No prob. Defense? Speedy. The non-conference schedule is easy-breezy and the Ducks should be walking on water all the way to 9-0 and a date at USC.

THE BAD NEWS: There's been a lot of, uh, smoke around the Oregon program with NCAA investigators snooping around over possible recruiting misdeeds and a spring ESPN report over alleged widespread marijuana use among the Ducks. Is this a program on the brink of very bad things?

OUR CALL: Who's going to beat these guys except for USC? Yeah, nobody. The Ducks have averaged 43 points per game under Kelly and continue to live in the fast lane.

6. Georgia

Big-time defense and big-time schedule

Coach Mark Richt distanced himself from the hot seat with a 10-game winning streak and an SEC East title last season. He's averaged 9.6 victories across 11 seasons in Athens, so any knocks on him mostly have to be chalked up to the hyperventilation of SEC fans. Richt will keep on keeping on (and, perhaps, then some) with QB Aaron Murray, plenty of playmakers, and a hulking, talented and veteran defense.

THE GOOD NEWS: The Dawgs won't dazzle with schemes on offense, but they do what they do well. If 2011 star recruit Isaiah Crowell doesn't stay durable and emerge as a star in the backfield, 2012 star recruit Keith Marshall will. Best news: No LSU, Alabama or Arkansas on the league schedule.

THE BAD NEWS: The offensive line lost three starters. The defense has to deal with multiple suspensions early in the season. The running game has to show up against physical teams (73 carries for 129 yards in season-ending losses to LSU and Michigan State).

OUR CALL: One SEC assistant coach told *Lindy's* that, "Georgia, to me, is the most talented defense in the league, no question." That's good enough for us to predict an East title and a close SEC championship game this time around.

7. Michigan

Sudden rise has Big Blue thinking bigger

Going 11-2 and winning the Sugar Bowl in his first season wiped away much of the frustration from the three-year Rich Rodriguez era, but it sure didn't do Brady Hoke any favors going forward. Any patience the Wolverines' faithful would have extended is gone now, given that smashing debut. Despite the record, he's still scrambling to cover some deficiencies in depth and talent. But if teams are going to make Michigan pay, they better hurry before Hoke's recruiting success takes hold.

THE GOOD NEWS: Michigan has a pair of 1,000-yard rushers in QB Denard Robinson and TB Fitzgerald Toussaint. Robinson says his comfort level running Al Borges' system for a second year is "day and night" from last year. That can't be good for opponents.

THE BAD NEWS: NT Mike Martin's departure alone would leave a gaping hole on the defensive line, but two other starters are gone from a unit that wasn't overly deep. Michigan has to shuffle up front, where defensive success starts ... or doesn't.

OUR CALL: Michigan opens against Alabama in Dallas and plays three of its first five away from Ann Arbor. The season-finale at Ohio State is no picnic, either, but the Wolverines should be able to outscore a lot of their problems.

8. FLORIDA STATE

'Noles entering now-or-never territory

Waiting for the tide to rise again after repeated epic recruiting hauls, Florida State has needed only ankle waders under Jimbo Fisher. The promise of a return to prominence has seemed realistic; there are enough blue-chip recruits on the roster that last season's 9-4 record can be classified as an unmitigated disappointment. The potential of Signing Day can only carry a coach so far; it's time for Fisher to change the discussion back to championships. We're thinking 11 wins should do it.

THE GOOD NEWS: The Seminoles should have a guillotine of a defense with speed and explosiveness at every level of that unit. QB EJ Manuel is electric and could be a difference-maker if he adds consistency.

THE BAD NEWS: Offensive line — namely left tackle, where DT convert Cameron Ewing could start — is unsettled. The personnel turnover on special teams rates as a chief worry for a team with a woeful recent history in close games (three losses by five points or less last season).

OUR CALL: Manuel need not be a Heisman Trophy candidate. He just needs to let the weapons around him work for him and count on a cutthroat defense to be the team's meal ticket to the BCS.

9. Arkansas

Which way, Hogs? Tough to say

Arkansas built a bridge to 2013 by bringing back popular assistant coach John L. Smith on a 10-month contract, but there still could be troubled water below the wake of Bobby Petrino's career face-plant. This looked to be *the* year for the Hogs, but how should we recalibrate expectations with an interim head coach? Will this be a more fragile team? Or could this be a rally-around-the-campfire moment? Hard to say.

THE GOOD NEWS: Offensive coordinator Paul Petrino ranked senior QB Tyler Wilson just a step below Superman this spring. No one argued. The Hogs have all manner of Saturday superheroes, including RB Knile Davis, who should be back to 2010 form after 2011's ankle injury.

THE BAD NEWS: Arkansas' defense is good, but doesn't rank with the SEC elite; consider that the Razorbacks allowed a combined 79 points in losses to LSU and Alabama last season. And Auburn fans happily remember the 65 the Tigers plastered on the Hogs in 2010.

OUR CALL: We like the hiring of Smith, who will retain the meeting of the minds between the players and coaches. But the Hogs have hit the SEC West glass ceiling, not breaking through, even with home games vs. LSU and 'Bama.

10. WEST VIRGINIA

Mountaineers Have Muscle to Take Big 12

Leaving the Big East for the Big 12 is not a lateral move, rather a major jump in class based on the offense and NFL-caliber talent on the other sideline every week. Second-year head coach Dana Holgorsen, formerly the coordinator at Oklahoma State, knows his offense works here. Whether the defense gets enough traction with its new-look 3-4 against the likes of Oklahoma and TCU is the great unknown entering 2012.

THE GOOD NEWS: Holgorsen can coach quarterbacks. Geno Smith leads an elite offense that attacks vertically, horizontally and everyplace in between. The Mountaineers have speed from marquee skill guys that go three deep at halfback, plus two 1,000-yard receivers — Tavon Austin and Stedman Bailey.

THE BAD NEWS: WVU goes from a league dotted with dormant offenses to the OK Corral that is the Big 12. The Mountaineers could really use DE/LB Bruce Irvin, who became a first-round 2012 draft pick. Coaches called the revamped 3-4 scheme a work in progress in the spring.

OUR CALL: Unlike the Big East, October and November in the Big 12 bring few breathers, but it looks as if the Mountaineers are conditioned to be marathon runners, as well as sprinters.

11. South Carolina

Poised for a run at East title

It only took 20 years, but South Carolina looks like an honest-to-goodness SEC program, built on first-round defensive talent, a punishing ground game, and one of the best coaches money can buy. You can make the case that no coach in the SEC has squeezed more out of his talent the past few years than Steve Spurrier, especially last season when he reversed course at quarterback and lost his star running back at midseason ... and still won a school-record 11 games.

THE GOOD NEWS: RB Marcus Lattimore is back from injury to plow even the stoutest of defenses. Dual-threat QB Connor Shaw could offer, at long last, the stability needed at the position. The only better pair of DEs (Jadeveon Clowney, Devin Taylor) is at LSU. Maybe.

THE BAD NEWS: The architect of the defense, coordinator Ellis Johnson, is gone, taking over as the boss at Southern Miss. A playmaker on each side of the ball — WR Alshon Jeffery and CB Stephon Gilmore — left early for the NFL. Gamecocks have to play LSU and Arkansas; East rival Georgia does not.

OUR CALL: The Gamecocks haven't lost in the past two years to annual rivals Georgia, Florida, Tennessee, and Clemson. Maybe only the Dawgs get them this season.

12. Michigan State

Young, talented, and making titles a habit

The return of 17 starters, only five of whom are seniors, suggests more success is on the way after coach Mark Dantonio guided MSU to consecutive 11-win seasons, including a share of the Big Ten title in 2010 and a Legends Division crown last year. More such good times should lie ahead, given the talent and experience Dantonio has returning. We'll know early one way or another, as Sparty takes on Boise State, Notre Dame and Ohio State — all at home — before the end of September.

THE GOOD NEWS: Four starters on the offensive line and tandem tailbacks Le'Veon Bell and Edwin Baker give MSU a chance to break in new quarterback Andrew Maxwell and an inexperienced receiving corps through a tough early schedule.

THE BAD NEWS: Maxwell seemed ready to take over for three-year starter Kirk Cousins, but a sprained knee knocked him out of the last half of spring practice. That didn't help him build a rapport with a receiving group that must replace B.J. Cunningham and Keshawn Martin.

OUR CALL: The Spartans are salty on defense, led by rush end William Gholston, and have a run game built for Big Ten success. That's got to be worth at least nine regular-season wins.

13. CLEMSON

Tigers look to get tougher on D

Set aside the perspiration on coach Dabo Swinney's brow over the prospect of replacing three starting offensive linemen and focus on what he cares about most — defense. Former Oklahoma coordinator Brent Venables was brought in to help Clemson not just repeat as conference champions, but to become a wrecking-ball group akin to the edgy Sooners' defenses of yesteryear. That defense will be tested every day in practice by better skill players than it will see on Saturdays.

THE GOOD NEWS: There aren't many offensive trios better than this dynamic group — QB Tajh Boyd, superstar WR Sammy Watkins and 1,000-yard rusher Andre Ellington. In the second half of the season, all the pedestal games are in Death Valley — Virginia Tech, Georgia Tech, NC State, South Carolina.

THE BAD NEWS: The Tigers must delete any recall of the 70-33 whipping from West Virginia in what became the Orange Crush Bowl, as well as the lopsided losses at NC State and South Carolina in back-to-back games in November.

OUR CALL: Clemson's talent level rates with the elite in the conference. That's nothing new. But the defense has to improve for the Tigers to be more than just a fun team to watch.

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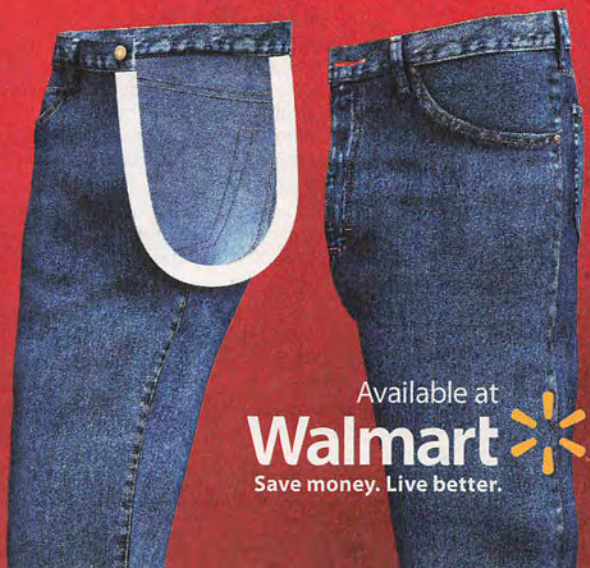

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14. Ohio State

Meyer's arrival has Buckeyes smiling

Urban Meyer's return to the sideline and to OSU, where he started his career as a graduate assistant coach in the 1980s, immediately erased the lingering bitterness among those too thick to understand that Jim Tressel's lies to the NCAA and to his own school couldn't be tolerated. Buckeye fans are all-in with Meyer, whose pursuit of a third BCS title ring must wait until the expiration of a one-year bowl ban left by Tressel.

THE GOOD NEWS: Sophomore QB Braxton Miller gives Meyer a piece of clay perfectly tailored to run the offense that Alex Smith and Tim Tebow rode to fame. DE John Simon's rejection of an early entry into the NFL also provides a fulcrum on which to build the defense.

THE BAD NEWS: OSU finished 115th nationally in passing a year ago and returns no receiver with more than 14 catches. The linebackers were underachieving in 2011, which is one reason OSU struggled to its first losing season since 1999.

OUR CALL: A friendly schedule and the euphoria over Meyer's arrival should work for a nice bounce-back from OSU's 6-7 finish. If the Buckeyes can add some element of the pass, and Miller can stay healthy, a 10-win season isn't far-fetched.

15. TCU

Move up to the Big 12 offers big opportunities

A new stadium, a new conference, a new outlook. All of it can't come fast enough after an offseason drug scandal that resulted in the arrest of four players for alleged dealing. As the most overachieving non-automatic qualifier of the BCS era, the Horned Frogs know the schedule is getting tougher in the Big 12, but they're ready. TCU specializes in slaying bigger, badder opponents ... and it gets Oklahoma at home.

THE GOOD NEWS: QB Casey Pachall made them forget Andy Dalton real quick-like. Throwing for 473 yards in a win at Boise State will do that. The backfield is set: Ed Wesley, Matthew Tucker and Waymon James combined for 2,100 yards. DE Stansly Maponga has All-America talent.

THE BAD NEWS: Strangely, Gary Patterson must revamp the defense. A unit that finished No. 1 in total D three years running slumped to 32nd last season. TCU will face five of 2011's top 15 offenses playing in the Big 12. LB Tanner Brock, one of those arrested, is the biggest loss from the drug busts.

OUR CALL: Patterson's 4-2-5 stack defense gets the toughest season-long test of his TCU career. Playing at Oklahoma State and West Virginia in back-to-back games will be the difference in the season. Ten wins aren't out of the question.

16. Oklahoma State

Gundy has Cowboys maturing into a real power

How do you follow the best season in school history? Coach 'em up. Part of the story of Oklahoma State's near-BCS title game season was the maturation of coach Mike Gundy. The Eddie Robinson National Coach of the Year also cashed in on a lot of T. Boone Pickens' cash, so Oklahoma State isn't going away as Gundy enters the prime of his career as a recruiter, play-caller, and coach. The Cowboys are no longer Texas and Oklahoma's little brother.

THE GOOD NEWS: RB Joseph Randle was overshadowed by the axis of Brandon Weeden and Justin Blackmon, but only Barry Sanders scored more TDs in a single Oklahoma State season. The Pokes are going to be more of a running team, which will be fine.

THE BAD NEWS: The quarterback position looks bare. Is that too harsh? Only one QB on the roster has thrown a pass in a college game. The winner at the end of the spring was true freshman Wes Lunt, who won't have the top two WRs from last year.

OUR CALL: Gundy has proven himself. The pipeline is rolling at Stillwater, and as long as Texas is on the rebound, consider Oklahoma State the second-best program in the Big 12.

17. Wisconsin

Major roster turnover doesn't dim hopes

Consecutive trips to the Rose Bowl and a resulting pair of excruciatingly close losses have ratcheted up the hunger for a BCS bowl win. Ohio State's one-year bowl ban will only help Bret Bielema coach his team back to the league championship game in Indianapolis and continue its recent dominance of the conference, as he sticks with what works: Running the same off-tackle play over and over.

THE GOOD NEWS: The Badgers will try to duplicate Russell Wilson's success in his lone year after transferring from North Carolina State by opening their arms to Maryland transfer Danny O'Brien. The 2010 ACC Newcomer of the Year will arrive in time for fall camp and to take over under center.

THE BAD NEWS: Bielema might need name tags to recognize the new coaches. Only three holdovers return from last season. The Badgers' 10 returning starters are also the fewest number of any team in the Big Ten.

OUR CALL: It's impossible to overlook a team planning to play Montee Ball and James White together in the backfield, given their combined 4,700 rushing yards the past two years. Wisconsin can ground and pound its way to the Big Ten title game if O'Brien makes a relatively smooth transition.

18. Virginia Tech

Supremely talented Thomas leads youthful Hokies

Junior QB Logan Thomas, as naturally gifted as they come with his defensive end body type (6-6, 262), can do a little bit of everything. He has electrifying ability and should elevate the offense in critical junctures until the supporting cast can be identified. The Hokies enter the season with a depth chart pocked with inexperience around Thomas; four offensive linemen, RB David Wilson, two wideouts and lead tight end were replaced from the 2011 group.

THE GOOD NEWS: Nine starters return from the Hokies' seventh-ranked defense, including the entire front seven, and depth everywhere. They're equipped to face almost any scheme and avoid mismatches. D-linemen James Gayle and Luther Maddy are game-changers.

THE BAD NEWS: The schedule is a minefield with five games against teams coming off of bye weeks and trips to Miami and Clemson. The Hokies almost always have a gem to carry the ball, but they enter the season unproven there and on the offensive line.

OUR CALL: Frank Beamer's postseason record has fallen into a 1-for-5 slump since 2004. But Thomas and a salty Bud Foster defense will tee up another good opportunity.

19. TEXAS

From back-of-pack to return of the Mack?

Texas was 8-5 in 2011, a respectable rebound from a losing 2010 season, but the Longhorns were outclassed by Oklahoma State, Baylor and OU in a season in which coach Mack Brown never found that easy-chair level of comfort he's been accustomed to. With a more seasoned roster and relative stability at quarterback, the Longhorns are contenders because they've rediscovered trademark strengths — big, powerful and deep along the offensive line and nasty on defense.

THE GOOD NEWS: QB David Ash is well ahead of Case McCoy at quarterback; plentiful options are available at running back and Ash can lean on big-play speed at receiver. Defensive coordinator Manny Diaz has a better feel for his personnel — and vice versa — in Year Two.

THE BAD NEWS: Depth thinner than a tortilla on defense could be problematic, and the difference between eight and 10 wins likely rides on the impact of the 2012 recruiting class. Brown's summertime stress might come from a kicking game that looked shaky in spring drills.

OUR CALL: UT doesn't need the next Vince Young or Colt McCoy. But if Ash is a capable manager, the Longhorns will survive tough times — like a three-game stretch against OSU, West Virginia and Oklahoma.

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20. Florida

If the QB position settles down ...

A 7-6 record won't earn Will Muschamp many celebratory chomps in The Swamp. Gainesville expects championships, not fringe bowl bids. To restore Florida atop the SEC pecking order, the defense-fueled coach has to figure out the offense. Which is to say: UF can't catch Alabama and LSU unless sophomore QBs Jacoby Brissett and Jeff Driskel exceed expectations. "I'm not really looking for style points. I'm looking for production," Muschamp said.

THE GOOD NEWS: Florida has a veteran defense and a stellar kicking game. A deep and talented stable of running backs led by Mike Gillislee can carry the offense until the quarterbacks get comfortable. New offensive coordinator Brent Pease wants a pedal-to-metal attack that keeps opponents guessing.

THE BAD NEWS: The defense suffered a blow with the torn ACL of junior DE Ronald Powell, but the Gators are hopeful he will return by October. LSU and Alabama don't fire blanks, and there's no guarding against shellshock for the fresh meat under center.

OUR CALL: Muschamp needs more fireworks to give the people what they come to see. The spring signs were mostly positive, but if one or both quarterbacks prove to be duds, Florida's title chances go up in smoke. Florida remains a rung (rungs?) below Alabama and LSU.

21. Stanford

Unlucky, but still dangerous

The two men most responsible for 31 victories over the past three seasons are gone — coach Jim Harbaugh left after the 2010 season, and two-time Heisman runner-up Andrew Luck became the first pick in the 2012 NFL Draft. David Shaw made a seamless transition last year to the head coach's headsets, retaining all of Harbaugh's brawny style on a campus known for brains. Luck has run out (OK, we can finally put those to rest), with sophomore Brett Nottingham or junior Josh Nunes poised to take over.

THE GOOD NEWS: Stanford was third nationally against the run last season, and that front seven, led by NT Terrence Stephens, DE Ben Gardner, LB Chase Thomas and LB Shayne Skov, is the team's strength. RB Stepfan Taylor fuels Stanford's tough-and-tricky rushing attack.

THE BAD NEWS: There is no getting around the drop-off at quarterback, which figures to result in more negative plays and pressure on the passing game, where the receivers are. ... Big-time OLs Jonathan Martin and David DeCastro are gone.

OUR CALL: Shaw signed the fifth-best class in the nation, according to Rivals.com, and this golden age of Stanford football isn't over. In 2012, the ground game and ferocious front seven keep Stanford relevant and dangerous.

22. Kansas State

Finding a way despite tiny margin for error

Doubt Bill Snyder at your own risk. At age 71, he's as savvy as ever. With a roster picked near the bottom of the Big 12 in 2011, he won 10 games. The Wildcats should have played in the Sugar Bowl. K-State is the anti-Big 12 in a league that is famous for its quarterbacks and offense. The Cats squeeze out enough offense (only 337 yards per game last year) and make enough big defensive plays to be pesky.

THE GOOD NEWS: A lot of folks considered QB Collin Klein the most valuable player in the country last year. Not the Heisman Trophy winner, just a guy who, if you took him off the roster, would be the difference between 10 wins and sitting at home during bowl season. LB Arthur Brown and CB Nigel Malone are rather studly.

THE BAD NEWS: The Wildcats probably need things to go just right. They won eight games last year by a touchdown or less. Klein is resilient, but if he is to stay upright, his protection must get better. Three starters are being replaced in the offensive line.

OUR CALL: Another 10-win season? Not quite. The secret to their success just might be pulling a repeat of 2011, when they were ninth in turnover margin.

23. LOUISVILLE

Best of a weak Big East good enough

Coach Charlie Strong knows respect is a reach given the recent collective product the Big East placed in the BCS, and he spent the offseason doing a Dangerfield act to Kentucky media, which he felt paid too much attention to the Final Four basketball team. Now that West Virginia calls the Big 12 home, Louisville has the muscle to win a conference title in Strong's third season with the core of the 2011 team back and QB Teddy Bridgewater leading a balanced offense.

THE GOOD NEWS: The Cardinals are loaded at running back, three sophomore wideouts bring big-play flair and Bridgewater, a sophomore, has all-league skills. Strong can't call enough blitzes and has the depth in the front seven to make that tempo work.

THE BAD NEWS: Louisville is again one of the youngest teams in the country after starting 11 true freshmen at some point last season. Another slow start is possible, especially if the O-line takes too much time to jell.

OUR CALL: The schedule reads like a queue of weak sisters. Don't expect the Cardinals to be relevant nationally — this *is* the Big East — but look for this to be a title season that trampolines Louisville into top 15 consideration in 2013.

24. Boise State

Adding a MWC trophy on their way out?

You gotta go with the odds — the Broncos have finished in the Associated Press Top 25 in eight of the past 10 years, and they would have been ranked in those other two seasons if they had made one more play in the final minute of bowl losses. This is, no doubt, a reloading year for the Program That Chris Petersen Will Never Leave, but it's a good time for a transition, with thorn-in-the-side TCU off to the Big 12 and Boise State revving the engines for the Big East in 2013.

THE GOOD NEWS: The last three seasons in which Boise State has used a first-time starting quarterback, the Broncos have gone 33-2, so let's not overstate the loss of Kellen Moore. (No pressure on you, junior Joe Southwick ... or whoever.) Broncos are good and deep at OL, WR and DB.

THE BAD NEWS: Boise State went 50-3 with Moore as the starting quarterback, so let's not minimize his departure. Standouts Tyrone Crawford, Shea McClellin and Billy Winn are gone from the defensive line, and Doug Martin leaves big shoes to fill at tailback.

OUR CALL: We'd expect one stumble somewhere after losing an opener at Michigan State, but that's it. Clear room in the trophy case for a MWC crown.

25. Nebraska

Tough schedule makes more wins unlikely

The Cornhuskers rooted around in their new conference last season, digging up a couple of highlights to go with three Big Ten losses. Anybody will take a win over Ohio State whenever they can get it, and knocking off Michigan State was a nice feather. The lopsided road losses to Wisconsin and Michigan were another matter. Nebraska knows what it has to do, but upward mobility depends on QB Taylor Martinez, whose spring footwork in the passing game was said to be much improved.

THE GOOD NEWS: Senior Rex Burkhead is one of the most reliable running backs in the country, and the Huskers have the depth to lighten his workload, if needed. Martinez has, at tantalizing times, looked like a Heisman candidate because of his superb running.

THE BAD NEWS: Nebraska's defense will miss the tackling of LB Lavonte David (133 stops) and the attitude of CB Alfonzo Dennard. The Big Ten scheduling misses are Indiana, Illinois and Purdue, expected to be among the league's worst teams.

OUR CALL: Nebraska went 9-4 last season and finished No. 24 in the AP poll after a Capital One Bowl loss to South Carolina. Sounds about right again this season.

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RATING THE TEAMS 1-124

1. LSU	SEC	1	
2. USC	Pac-12	1	
3. Alabama	SEC	2	
4. Oklahoma	Big 12	1	
5. Oregon	Pac-12	2	
6. Georgia	SEC	3	
7. Michigan	Big Ten	1	
8. Florida State	ACC	1	
9. Arkansas	SEC	4	
10. West Virginia	Big 12	2	
11. South Carolina	SEC	5	
12. Michigan State	Big Ten	2	
13. Clemson	ACC	2	
14. Ohio State	Big Ten	3	
15. TCU	Big 12	3	
16. Oklahoma State	Big 12	4	
17. Wisconsin	Big Ten	4	
18. Virginia Tech	ACC	3	
19. Texas	Big 12	5	
20. Florida	SEC	6	
21. Stanford	Pac-12	3	
22. Kansas State	Big 12	6	
23. Louisville	Big East	1	
24. Boise State	MWC	1	
25. Nebraska	Big Ten	5	

No.	Team	Conf.	Conf. Rank	
26.	Utah	Pac-12	4	QB Jordan Wynn is back from injury as Utes begin second Pac season.
27.	Penn State	Big Ten	6	Critical year; O'Brien needs to show that Penn State is still Penn State.
28.	NC State	ACC	4	Great DBs, fine QB. Could challenge in Atlantic Divison after 8-5 season.
29.	Texas A&M	SEC	7	Big "If:" If the Aggies finish games stronger, they'll be fine, even in SEC.
30.	Missouri	SEC	8	Mizzou, QB James Franklin ready to challenge SEC with spread-option.
31.	Auburn	SEC	9	Maturing team should win at least eight games again.
32.	Washington	Pac-12	5	QB Keith Price, WR-KR Kasen Williams are supreme talents. Oh, that D ...
33.	Notre Dame	Ind	1	Who's the QB? Schedule makes it hard to win more than eight.
34.	Virginia	ACC	5	Coach Mike London has made major strides in two years in program.
35.	Georgia Tech	ACC	6	Paul Johnson is 21-11 in ACC in 4 years, second-best mark in league.
36.	Rutgers	Big East	2	Defense could be even better than last year's top 15 unit.
37.	Tennessee	SEC	10	After worst-ever 1-7 SEC record, Vols should rebound to win 7-8.
38.	UCF	CUSA	1	Loaded backfield helps push the Knights to top of Conference USA.
39.	BYU	Ind	2	Cougars try to take advantage of QB Riley Nelson's good wheels.
40.	Texas Tech	Big 12	7	Experienced group back, but gave up 256 pts in 5-game skid to end '11.
41.	Iowa	Big Ten	7	Hawkeyes have been just 4-4 in the Big Ten in each of past two years.
42.	Purdue	Big Ten	8	Veteran team could inch forward again after 7-6 season.
43.	Baylor	Big 12	8	With Mr. Heisman gone, it's back to scratching for any old bowl.
44.	Pittsburgh	Big East	3	The play of QB Tino Sunseri and a rebuilt defense are the keys.
45.	North Carolina	ACC	7	Larry Fedora needs to bring stability back to Heels.
46.	Mississippi State	SEC	11	QB Tyler Russell holds the key to making a move higher.
47.	Cincinnati	Big East	4	Bearcats could go far with QB Munchie Legaux at the helm.
48.	UCLA	Pac-12	6	An NFL retread in Los Angeles? Hey, this could work!
49.	Miami	ACC	8	Al Golden's contract runs through 2020; 2012 not one to remember.
50.	Cal	Pac-12	7	Progress from QB Zach Maynard would shake Bears from doldrums.
51.	Washington State	Pac-12	8	Welcome, Mike Leach. The era of the Cougs being boring is over.
52.	Vanderbilt	SEC	12	Competed and went to bowl in James Franklin's first season.
53.	SMU	CUSA	2	RB Zach Line returns after scoring 17 touchdowns last season.
54.	Wake Forest	ACC	9	Third-year starting QB Tanner Price helps keep Deacs competitive.
55.	Northwestern	Big Ten	9	Looking at something right around .500 for the third straight year.
56.	Connecticut	Big East	5	RB Lyle McCombs and experienced defense provide bowl hopes.
57.	South Florida	Big East	6	Led again by QB B.J. Daniels, Bulls try to shed second-half slump.
58.	Iowa State	Big 12	9	One of the nation's best linebacker tandems give reason to tune in.
59.	Arizona	Pac-12	9	RichRod motivated to prove Michigan flop wasn't all on him.
60.	Ole Miss	SEC	13	Getting buried in the league with 15 consecutive losses in SEC play.
61.	Kentucky	SEC	14	Had five-year bowl streak snapped in Joker Phillips' second year.
62.	Illinois	Big Ten	10	Tim Beckman takes over after the Zooker hit a brick wall at midseason.
63.	Arizona State	Pac-12	10	QBs new. Run game solid. Todd Graham ... just renting?
64.	Marshall	CUSA	3	Herd rallying in the right direction, should make back-to-back bowls.
65.	Oregon State	Pac-12	11	Rough patch (eight wins in two years) for respected coach Mike Riley.
66.	Tulsa	CUSA	4	Hurricane lost QB G.J. Kinne from team than went 7-1 in the league.
67.	Houston	CUSA	5	Kevin Sumlin didn't leave cupboard bare, but 13-1 ain't happening.
68.	Ohio	MAC	1	QB Tyler Tettleton back to lead the Bobcats, who went 10-4 in 2011.
69.	Duke	ACC	10	Not enough gimmies on the schedule for first bowl since 1994.
70.	Southern Miss	CUSA	6	First-year coach Ellis Johnson could be tripped up by QB issues.
71.	Boston College	ACC	11	Star power lacking: Luke Kuechly gone, Montel Harris ailing (knee).
72.	Louisiana Tech	WAC	1	Sonny Dykes has program on rise; clear favorite in watered-down WAC.
73.	FIU	Sun Belt	1	No more T.Y. Hilton, but looks like a bowl for third straight year.
74.	Minnesota	Big Ten	11	Check the sked: Gophers could be 4-0, surpassing 2011's win total.
75.	Syracuse	Big East	7	Re-addition of Temple to Big East keeps Orange out of last.

No.	Team	Conf.	Conf. Rank	
76.	Maryland	ACC	12	After 2-10 disaster, Terps young and inexperienced across the board.
77.	Colorado	Pac-12	12	New QB, new RB, standout WR Paul Richardson tore ACL in spring.
78.	Fresno State	MWC	2	Has league's best run-pass combination as it moves to MWC.
79.	Wyoming	MWC	3	Sophomore QB Brett Smith is a keeper; Pokes went 8-5 last season.
80.	Navy	Ind	3	Mids try to get back into bowl biz after seven-year streak snapped.
81.	San Diego State	MWC	4	Aztecs will have to reload on offense before 2013 move to Big East.
82.	Utah State	WAC	2	Will carry over momentum from strong finish (plus bowl) to 2011.
83.	Nevada	MWC	5	Pack went 4-1 last season against current members of the MWC.
84.	Kent State	MAC	2	Lots of experience is a positive ...if it means woeful offense gets better.
85.	Western Michigan	MAC	3	Having QB Alex Carder is a good start, but questions abound on D.
86.	Air Force	MWC	6	Falcons try for sixth straight bowl with new key players in backfield.
87.	Indiana	Big Ten	12	Kevin Wilson's only win in debut season came vs. South Carolina State.
88.	Hawaii	MWC	7	At long last, Norm Chow is a head coach for the first time.
89.	Kansas	Big 12	10	And so begins the second act of Charlie Weis' coaching career.
90.	Arkansas State	Sun Belt	2	Gus Malzahn brings his spead offense to first head coaching gig.
91.	Northern Illinois	MAC	4	Key personnel move: Jordan Lynch replaces QB Chandler Harnisch.
92.	San Jose State	WAC	3	With decent QB play (a huge "if") Spartans could be bowl-bound.
93.	Colorado State	MWC	8	Hiring head coach Jim McElwain (Alabama OC) is a good start.
94.	La.-Monroe	Sun Belt	3	Getting close to a "win-or-else" situation for coach Todd Berry.
95.	Toledo	MAC	5	Matt Campbell, at 32, becomes the youngest coach in the FBS.
96.	Louisiana	Sun Belt	4	Mark Hudspeth led team to New Orleans Bowl win in first season.
97.	New Mexico State	WAC	4	Aggies benefit from WAC departures of Nevada, Hawaii, Fresno State.
98.	Troy	Sun Belt	5	Offense should be better ... defense, well, maybe not.
99.	Western Kentucky	Sun Belt	6	Taking a small step back after last year's surprising 7-5 run.
100.	Ball State	MAC	6	A 6-6 season rated as a surprise in coach Pete Lembo's first year.
101.	North Texas	Sun Belt	7	Not looking like Mean Green's first winning season since 2004.
102.	Idaho	WAC	5	Vandals lost too much on both lines to keep pace with WAC leaders.
103.	Middle Tennessee	Sun Belt	8	Must come together on D for an outside shot at breaking even.
104.	Miami (Ohio)	MAC	7	Followed up 2010 MAC title with a plunge to 4-8 overall.
105.	Army	Ind	4	Coach Rich Ellerson looking for first win vs. rivals Navy, Air Force (0-6).
106.	Temple	Big East	8	Bad timing: Rebuilding year comes as Owls move back into Big East.
107.	Tulane	CUSA	7	Curtis Johnson takes over a team that is 31-76 in the past nine years.
108.	East Carolina	CUSA	8	Losing QB Dominique Davis tough for a team that was 5-7 a year ago.
109.	Bowling Green	MAC	8	QB Matt Schilz threw for 3,024 yards and 28 touchdowns last year.
110.	Rice	CUSA	9	Defense has been too shaky to make a move in Conference USA.
111.	UTEP	CUSA	10	Tough schedule has Miners headed to seventh losing season in a row.
112.	Buffalo	MAC	9	Branden Oliver rushed for 1,395 yards last season.
113.	Florida Atlantic	Sun Belt	9	Carl Pelini second FAU coach ever, replacing Howard Schnellenberger.
114.	UAB	CUSA	11	Hiring of Garrick McGee creates a little buzz around the Blazers.
115.	Akron	MAC	10	Terry Bowden is a bold hire for a program that had little left to lose.
116.	Eastern Michigan	MAC	11	Alex Gillett is most experienced QB in the MAC.
117.	Central Michigan	MAC	12	It's been back-to-back 3-9 campaigns for the Chippewas.
118.	UNLV	MWC	9	Bobby Hauck is 4-21 in two seasons, with no road victories.
119.	Memphis	CUSA	12	Bar set low for Justin Fuente; predecessor Larry Porter was 3-21.
120.	New Mexico	MWC	10	Bob Davie jumped from the ESPN booth into a fine mess.
121.	South Alabama	Sun Belt	10	It's the final year of the Jags' transition to the FBS.
122.	Texas State	WAC	6	Dennis Franchione starting second year of second tour in San Marcos.
123.	UMass	MAC	13	Basically, a .500-level FCS program for the past four seasons.
124.	UT-San Antonio	WAC	7	Potential here. Roadrunners will move to C-USA after year in WAC.

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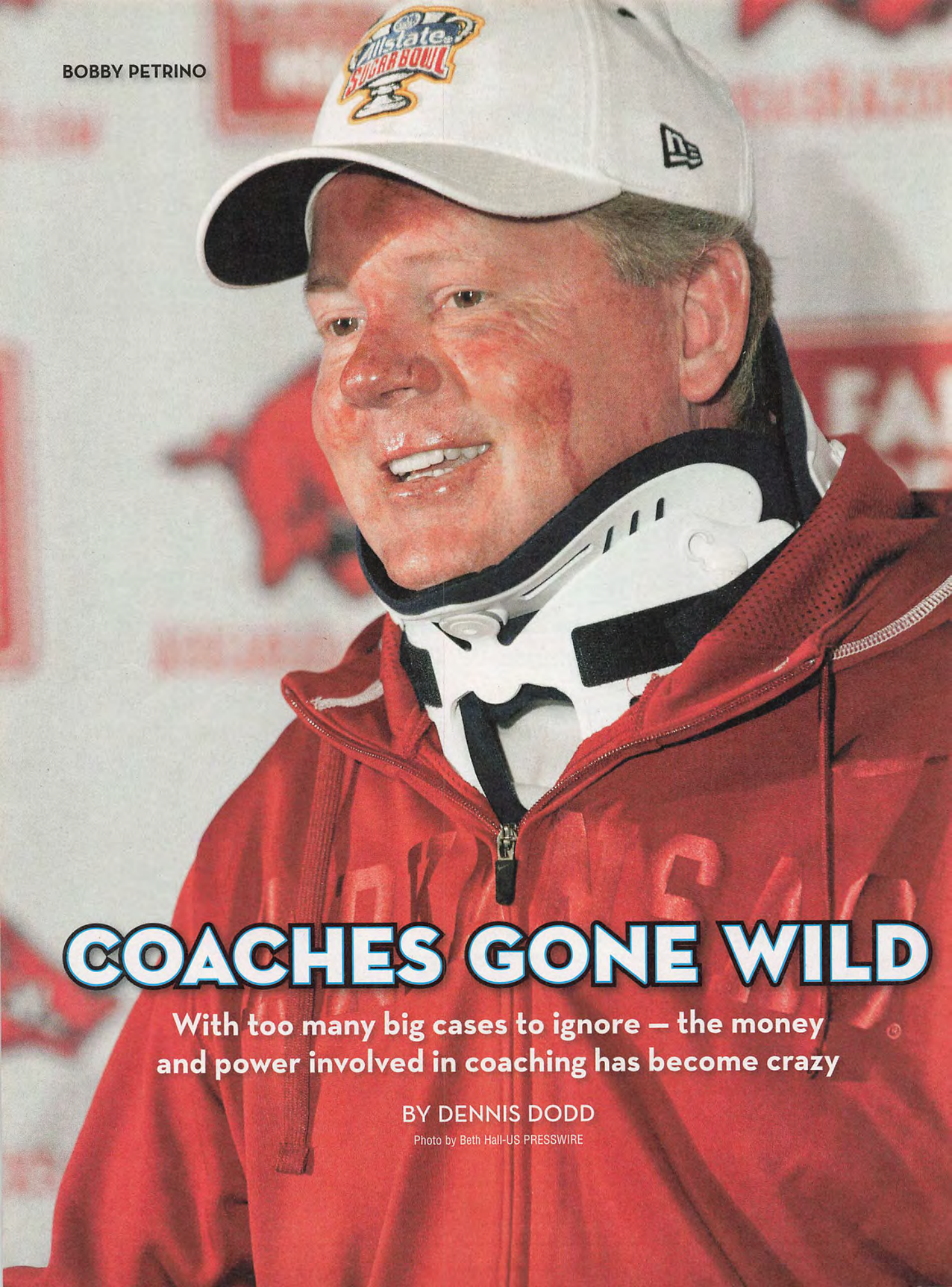


BOBBY PETRINO

COACHES GONE WILD

With too many big cases to ignore – the money and power involved in coaching has become crazy

BY DENNIS DODD

Photo by Beth Hall-US PRESSWIRE

It has not been a proud run for a significant slice of the coaching profession, so forgive us if we leave any names out.

Joe Paterno? A sad and sudden fall from grace. Now, tragically, gone.

Butch Davis? Fired at North Carolina.

Urban Meyer? A new job — and perhaps a new reputation.

Jim Tressel? He's *soooo* 2011.

There *are* deadlines, you know, so we offer this disclaimer: The dizzying pace of coaches gone wild means that Bobby Petrino may even have his next job by the time you read this.

Coaches' conduct has not only become a narrative for the 2012 season, it has been the main talking point in the industry for a while. Blame whatever and whomever.

• The money? In the offseason, Alabama's Nick Saban became the first $6 million coach (at least for a portion of his contract). That means, by the way, that he's making in salary roughly *three times* the amount of money that the school pays for the complete scholarship package (tuition, room, board, books, etc.) of all 85 players on scholarship.

• The power? Petrino apparently felt he was titanium. One of the state's highest-paid employees rode helmetless on a motorcycle with a woman half his age who was not his wife. And that's the tasteful part of the story.

• Maybe we're all to blame. As long as we give our undying adoration to mere mortals, we shouldn't be surprised. But, Good Lord, the variety of the misconduct has been stunning. There were NCAA violations at North Carolina and Ohio State, but Davis was never named in the NCAA report on the Tar Heels. Tressel *was* the central figure in Ohio State getting a bowl ban in 2012.

• Years of neglect by coaches and administrators may have led to Miami being on the NCAA chopping block. A weasely jock sniffer named Nevin Shapiro allegedly showered players with cash, gifts and the South Beach night life. Shapiro was so influential that he once reportedly confronted Miami's compliance director in the press box. And he *still* was allowed to be around the team.

But how do you compare that with whatever role Paterno had in the Jerry Sandusky scandal?

"I think the Paterno thing and Tressel had a profound impact on this country," said Jack Stark, a clinical psychologist out of Nebraska with a thriving sports practice. "It changed college presidents, ADs and boards of directors who are saying, 'I don't care who this guy is. We cannot (let him) take the program down.'"

Since May 2011, those two national championship coaches departed in shame, along with a highly respected president (Penn State's Graham Spanier) and his athletic director (Tim Curley, who was placed on administrative leave). How quickly things change. Spanier told CBSSports.com last summer that cheating in college football was "about as bad as it's been in the modern era."

Turns out the breaking of NCAA rules wasn't his biggest concern.

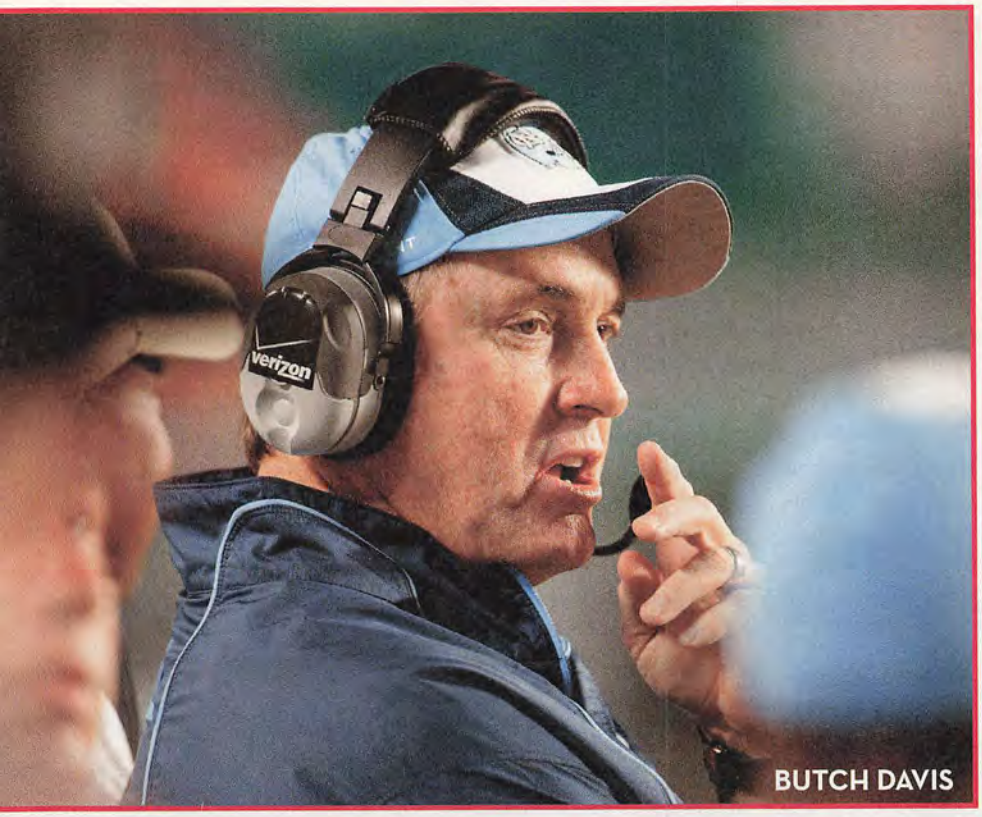
"It's so crazy that this one (freakin') pervert son of a bitch can bring down a university," Paul Levine said of Sandusky. Levine, a Southern California-based author and screenwriter, became devoted to Paterno as a Penn State student in the 1960s.

"I viewed him then," Levine said, "as a

> "I'm deeply worried about football ... if we don't fix some of the problems in football, in five years it will be as bad as basketball."
>
> **— Former Penn State president Graham Spanier, months before the Jerry Sandusky case became public**

CHIP KELLY

Photo by Kirby Lee-Image of Sport-US PRESSWIRE



BUTCH DAVIS

Photo by Jonathan Brownfield-US PRESSWIRE

"I was there when Woody Hayes punched that guy in the Gator Bowl. When all is said and done, it is a chapter in the book – it's not *the* book."

– Glen Mason, longtime coach, now Big Ten Network analyst

towering figure."

But towering figures are being toppled around the country. Where tradition, loyalty and discipline were once considered the greatest virtues of the profession, we have seen win-at-all-costs override everything else. There *is* nothing else.

In the spring, Petrino was the latest coach to run his career into a ditch. (OK, pun intended.)

No one knows when his profession is going to be tamed. The same organization (American Football Coaches Association) that urged the NCAA to adopt tougher penalties for rulebook cheating can't account for the marital sort.

Does it matter off the field? Should it matter? There was a time when we were disgusted that Lane Kiffin had piled up a half dozen secondary violations at Tennessee.

Something has changed for the worse. What once was shocking — Woody Hayes punching a Clemson linebacker — doesn't qualify in modern times. While Hayes "only" lost his temper ... *The Sporting News* said in an offseason story that Meyer lost control of his team during a magical run at Florida.

"Over the last two years he was there," one former player told the publication, "the players had taken complete control of the team."

The result was not only 30 run-ins with the law over six years by Florida players, but also two national championships.

So where's the problem? In one way or another, all the coaches mentioned in this story delivered. Some spectacularly.

While Chip Kelly hadn't been formally charged by the NCAA as of late April, the recruiting practices of Oregon's coach are open to question. His program was under investigation by the NCAA. At the least, we can all agree that paying $25,000 to a third-party "evaluator" (Willie Lyles) seems like a bit much, and — uh, providing NCAA statements that, shall we say, can be easily misinterpreted — is not exactly in the spirit of compliance.

Davis led Miami out of a mid-1990s probation and laid the recruiting foundation for the Hurricanes' 2001 national championship. If you're willing to look past since-vacated wins in 2008 and 2009 at North Carolina, Davis led the Tar Heels to their most sustained success since Mack Brown. That was before academic fraud, South Beach partying, and extra benefits were discovered by the NCAA.

Larry Fedora now takes over in a low-pressure job in the underachieving ACC. Like Meyer, his program is also banned from a bowl in 2012.

Meyer didn't know about the ban until the NCAA weighed in 22 days after Ohio State hired him in December. "That was a shot," he said.

Consider it a gift from The Vest that keeps on giving.

Bill O'Brien takes over at Penn State, a fresh face at a place that has been comfortable with Paterno's comforting, coke-bottle-rimmed, craggy mug for decades. It's about more than turning around a program at Penn State. It's about changing the groupthink that allowed someone like Sandusky to operate in the shadows for years.

Maybe that's why Penn State intentionally didn't hire an insider. The chain link fence that walled off Happy Valley from the world needs to be torn

down. Glen Mason has considered all this. He was one of Paterno's closest friends. He also played and coached for Woody.

"I was there when Woody Hayes punched that guy in the Gator Bowl," said Mason, now an analyst with the Big Ten Network. "When all is said and done, it is a chapter in the book — it's not *the* book."

For Woody. For the profession. We can only hope. For now, Petrino's salvation is that he didn't cheat according to the 434-page NCAA Manual, the industry's gospel according to Mark (Emmert).

Character issues alone usually don't keep a fired coach down for long. The key point, according to an attorney who has represented coaches in the past, is, "There weren't any NCAA violations."

Holding coaches to the same standard of discipline asked of their players is a good place to start. Who knew that Arkansas athletic director Jeff Long would qualify as Man of the Year material for merely doing the right thing?

The right thing apparently went out of style a long time ago. In the 75-year history of the wire service era, only two schools with national championships have *never* had an NCAA major violation in football: BYU and Penn State.

"That's kind of amazing to me if that's the case," BYU athletic director Tom Holmoe said, "because it doesn't bode well."

The last four BCS title game participants — Auburn, Oregon, LSU, Alabama — have either been on probation, are about to be investigated or already are under investigation by the NCAA. Almost half of the current FBS schools (56) have committed at least one major violation in football since 1987. Since that year, there has been an average of three such cases nationally per year.

Multiple champions of the past 20 years have been named Miami, USC, Florida, Alabama and LSU ... none of which would need an introduction to the members of the NCAA compliance committee.

The "everybody else does it," defense has simply become accepted as the norm, and the only issue is whose hand will be caught in the cookie jar next. And that's just with the NCAA violations.

"I'm deeply worried about football," Spanier said last summer before the walls fell in on him and his university. "I believe if we don't fix some of the problems in football, in five years it will be as bad as basketball."

That's about as bad a thing as you can say about college football at the moment. The 2011 Final Four featured two coaches who had vacated tournament appearances in the same *year* — John Calipari and Jim Calhoun in 1996.

UConn is ineligible for the 2013 tournament, a victim of new, toughened standards in the Academic Progress Rate. North Carolina and Ohio State are already there with a postseason ban in football for their own misdeeds. Emmert's stated purpose since he took office two years ago was to wipe out the incentive to cheat.

He's got some work to do.

"The reward outweighs the risk," said Dave Ridpath, an NCAA compliance expert and assistant professor of Sports Administration at Ohio University. "Most people will tell you that USC lost their BCS championship (in the Reggie Bush case). At the end, I wonder if people really care."

"The reward outweighs the risk. Most people will tell you that USC lost their BCS championship (in the Reggie Bush case). At the end, I wonder if people really care."

– Dave Ridpath, NCAA compliance expert and assistant professor of Sports Administration at Ohio University

URBAN MEYER

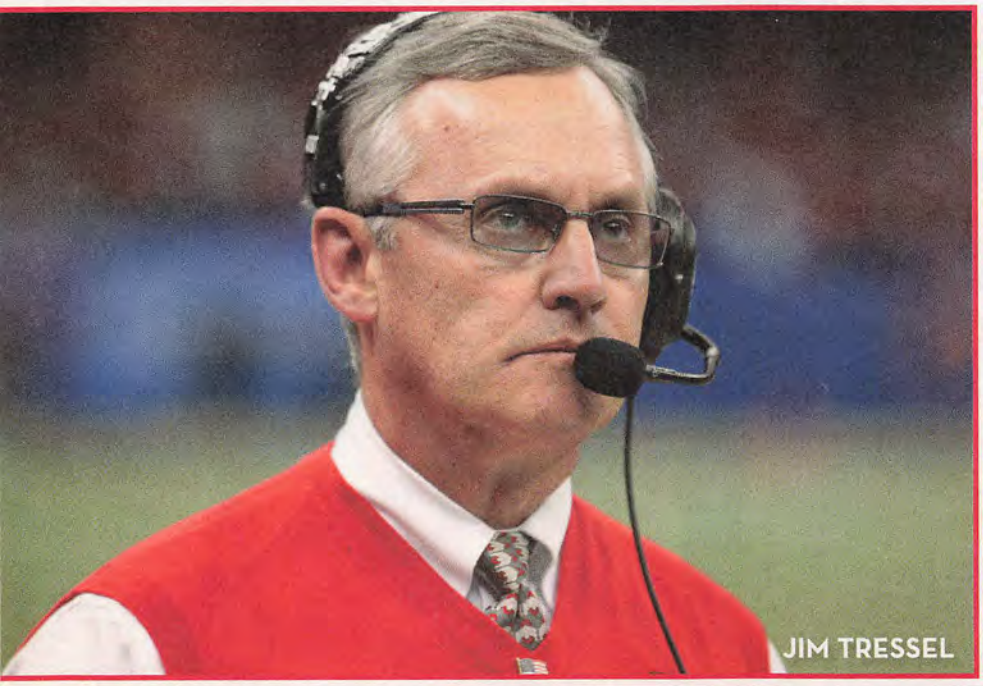
Photo by Greg Bartram-US PRESSWIRE

JOE PATERNO

Photo by Rob Christy-US PRESSWIRE

"The Paterno thing and Tressel had a profound impact on this country. It changed college presidents, ADs and boards of directors who are saying, 'I don't care who this guy is. We cannot (let him) take the program down.'"

— Jack Stark, sports psychologist



JIM TRESSEL

Photo by Matthew Emmons-US PRESSWIRE

Petrino's baggage going forward includes a morally ambiguous record of covering up and lying, whether it was on a tarmac talking to Auburn officials or walking out on the Atlanta Falcons. Throw in the Arkansas misdeeds and you would think that's enough to keep Petrino from *ever* being a head coach at the BCS level again.

"I think it's going to take him a very long time," said Stark, who has spent 35 years in the profession. "He's done two things. He burned his bridges pretty good at the pro level in the middle of the season, which is unheard of. There is a lot of anger there at the pro level.

"At the collegiate level ... the thing that distinguished him is he repeatedly lied. That seems to be the new line in the sand for athletic directors."

That's a line that puts ADs, coaches and college sports on trial after the latest "worse than ..." scandal. If Petrino is hired again at the college level, then what are his employers saying about his conduct? What does it say about *their* values?

Probably that winning trumps most everything, which confirms that exactly nothing is new.

Petrino remains one of most innovative offensive minds in the country. He took a program that had been in the middle of the SEC and elevated it to national championship contention last season. The Hogs were ranked No. 3 in the BCS going into the last week of the season.

It may be as simple as the value of the sport itself. A disgraced Petrino would be hotter — excuse that adjective — than any other sport's disgraced coach. Disgrace suddenly becomes relative when an athletic department's finances are involved. As football goes, so goes that department. Under Petrino, Arkansas had equaled its best two-year run (21 wins) in school history.

Coaches will be hired again for the same reason Petrino's return can't be discounted. They win. That might be all Coach P needs.

Here's what might make Petrino's conduct harder to overlook: There's no argument about his culpability. It was

self-inflicted and terrible.

That motorcycle passenger, Jessica Dorrell, somehow landed a job in the football office that was coveted by 158 other applicants. She was paid by Petrino — $20,000, according to school officials — beyond her $55,000 salary.

Petrino apparently didn't care about using a private cell phone either. A simple records request revealed thousands of calls and texts to Dorrell since September. Either Petrino wanted to get caught or thought he was too powerful to be fired if he ever did.

Emotional scars do heal — this *is* the land of second chances — and there has to be an AD/president somewhere who is going to be desperate enough to win.

Stark sees those character flaws each day. He has worked with NASCAR drivers who can't walk into a restaurant without being swarmed, and CEOs who handle billion-dollar corporations. In an offshoot of his practice, he also counsels football coaches around the country. There was so much demand that at one point he had to stop taking clients.

"I worked with Tom Osborne for 25 years," Stark said. "I bet he always felt that he was a year away from getting fired if he went 6-6."

There is a difference, though, between insecurity and Biblical-proportion indiscretion.

There are also worse Monday-morning analyses of Petrino's future than Tim Brando's.

"He going to have to pull the PR coup of a lifetime by throwing himself on the Dr. Phils of the world," said the national radio host and CBS analyst. "He is going to have to go on daytime TV, maybe follow up with a book. If he doesn't have handlers, he better get them. If he does it the right way, he comes back full bore."

Of course, most of Hog Nation could give two snorts what happens next to Petrino. His future remains a national case study — until the next coach goes wild.

Dennis Dodd is a senior writer for CBSSports.com covering national college football.

DEREK DOOLEY

Photo by Beth Hall-US PRESSWIRE

HOT SEAT COACHES

Some coaches get fired the old-fashioned way — by not winning enough. Here is a look at five who need to win now, or they and the coaches they hired will join the unemployment line:

1. DEREK DOOLEY, TENNESSEE – Dooley is 11-14 in two seasons and is trying to avoid the first three-year stretch of losing seasons in Knoxville in more than 100 years. **PREDICTION:** A revamped coaching staff can coax at least seven wins out of this bunch, but none of the victories figure to resonate. Vol Nation will still be itching for change.

2. FRANK SPAZIANI, BOSTON COLLEGE – Always fighting a battle for relevancy within its own city, Boston College has had declining victory totals in Spaziani's three seasons, including last year's 4-8 mark that snapped a 12-year bowl streak. **PREDICTION:** Spaz won't get to the final year of a five-year plan.

3. RANDY EDSALL, MARYLAND – The second-year Terps coach is already trying to stay afloat after a 2-10 season, the transfers of about two dozen players (bye, bye Danny O'Brien) and a tepid endorsement from his athletic director in the offseason. **PREDICTION:** The cash-strapped Terps can't afford to make a change so soon.

4. TOMMY TUBERVILLE, TEXAS TECH – Tuberville arrived before the 2010 season amid the tempest of Mike Leach's dismissal, so that wasn't easy, and he has done little to convert the pro-Pirate crowd after compiling a 13-12 record and off-field drama. **PREDICTION:** A veteran team cures some of the woes. Patience prevails for a year.

5. JEFF TEDFORD, CAL – He had the Golden Bears on USC's heels for a stretch, but those days are gone, and another middlin' finish is projected for this season. Cal's 12-15 conference record the past three years suggests the magic is gone after 10 years on the job. **PREDICTION:** The program needs a major shot in the arm to pay for the renovated Memorial Stadium ... and it will get one with a new coach touting a national image.

— Anthony Gimino

REBOOT

WHEN THE BIG 12 HAS 10, AND THE BIG TEN HAS 12, AND THE BIG EAST HEADS TO SAN DIEGO ...

BY DENNIS DODD

Call it the Great Reboot.

Usually, that's the thing you do to your computer when the screen freezes. Too much information causes overload. Hit that cursed button. Sometimes it works; sometimes it doesn't. That's why they put customer support overseas that keeps you on hold for three hours.

In 2012, the Great Reboot projects the curse of the digital age to the condition of college football.

Rebirth, reset, whatever.

There has been too much overload lately. At the very least, the hard drive needs a good defragmenting. Or even debugging.

It seems like the entire sport is rebooting itself in 2012. What's old is new.

The hottest topic of the offseason was the 11 FBS commissioners (plus Notre Dame) trying to come up with a new postseason model that would begin in 2014. Sorta reformatting the drive and starting from scratch? Not quite.

There are no new ideas, just new buzz words and revenue sharing models to frame those old ideas.

Conference realignment already had a chokehold on the game. There's a game show out there somewhere just waiting for the title: "Who's In That League?" The Big East spent the offseason reconfiguring itself into what will eventually be a four time-zone league in 2015.

In 2014, Boise State and San Diego State join what is still apparently going to be called the Big East Conference. East of what, we're not sure. *Big Country*, anyone? Or the Big Frequent Fliers Conference?

In the meantime, the SEC added a team from the Midwest (Missouri) and a team from the Southwest (Texas A&M).

What's newest is the Pac-12, as it debuts a network, cashes in on a lucrative rights deal and continues to break in six new coaches

since the beginning of 2010.

Change, of course, isn't always good. Twenty-seven programs are starting over with new coaches. In the past year, Ohio State and Arkansas sent coaches packing with a combined nine BCS bowls on their resumes. Not that they had much choice, mind you.

The Great Reboot also has descended into the absurd. Try to name a school that *hasn't* attempted a big splash in the offseason — successful or not — by debuting new uniforms. Seems highlighter yellow jerseys are replacing red zone defense as the most important component of a program.

The Big 12 — which is down to 10 — has lost four teams in the past two years. It added West Virginia and TCU beginning this season to get back up to 10. Never mind that the Mountaineers' closest Big 12 foe is in Iowa.

Speaking of realignment, for 83 years, Cal's Memorial Stadium has rested on the Hayward Fault, one of the most active earthquake zones in the world. Beginning this year it rests more comfortably. The historic stadium has been retro-fitted to be quake-proof.

But shaky (as in finances) continues to be the operative word in Berkeley. Now if Jeff Tedford can only find a quarterback.

The best place to start on the field is the SEC. Why not? The league has won six consecutive national championships. Alabama and LSU both start where they finished, somewhere in the top five. In Tuscaloosa, the more things change, the more they stay Saban.

That crystal football has ended up at Alabama two of the past three years and already they need a new one. The father of a player knocked over the trophy and broke it, causing one of the biggest stirs of the spring.

That's motivation enough for Nick Saban to go out and win a third crystal football in four years. He loses a Heisman finalist (Trent Richardson), an offensive coordinator (Jim McElwain left for Colorado State) and the usual raft of NFL draftees. The directive hasn't changed. Not one minute of rest.

"I understand that it's only human nature to be satisfied with success," Saban told CBSSports.com. "The good news is that this team doesn't seem to have as much of a hangover (as the 2010 team). But I know this is something we're going to have to hammer home into their heads every day."

Like most of last season, though, Bama might not be considered the best team in its own league. LSU actually gets better at quarterback. Zach Mettenberger takes over for the sometimes-dependable Jordan Jefferson. He'll hand off to a stable of running backs that goes five deep.

The defense returns a Heisman finalist in Tryann Mathieu, and a philosopher — the always chatty defensive end Sam Montgomery. The Tigers are also trying to figure out what the hell happened after the 21-0 skunking in the second Alabama meeting that also happened to be the BCS Championship Game.

"You still hear it now. Our kids still hear it now about the game," offensive coordinator Greg Studrawa said. "Because everybody was so fired up after a wonderful season, that when it ends like that, that's what they focus on. Not the 13 wins, not how great it was up to that point.

"Now you get a chance for redemption."

Speaking of redemption, Rich Rodriguez is at his second job since leaving West Virginia. You may recall that the Michigan thing didn't quite work out. At Arizona, he is remade, redeemed and — yes — rebooted. Athletic director Greg Byrne conducted a national search and found the anti-Mike Stoops. Rich is an offensive guy. Rich is personable. Rich also trashed the effort of Stoops' former players — while renting Stoops' house in the offseason.

RichRod found 300-pound linemen who couldn't bench their weight. He found defensive backs who couldn't put up 240.

"My point is, what have you been doing?" Rodriguez said. "You cheated the program,a but you also cheated yourself."

Speaking of starting over, Mike Leach finally found work. He had been out of coaching since December 2009, and we were beginning to wonder if active lawsuits against Texas Tech and ESPN were going to impact his future. It was only a matter of time, even if that time lasted almost two years.

Washington State is a heck of a comfort zone. Call it Lubbock North. Out of the way and, currently, out of mind. But Leach in Pullman has a clean slate, a loyal and capable AD and a president who doesn't meddle.

"A lot of schools wanted him," athletic director Bill Moos said. "He wanted us."

The same can be said of Urban Meyer. The best name remaining on the board in late November ended a brief sabbatical when he got the Ohio State gig.

In a flash, the mercurial former Florida coach decided to leave his family to devote more time to football. Or something like that. If Meyer was looking to rest, recover and retool, it didn't take very long for him to do it. His time away from football lasted considerably less than a year when you remember he was an ESPN analyst before taking the Buckeyes' job.

Photo by John Biever /Sports Illustrated/Getty Images

BCS National Championship: Alabama's Trent Richardson holding up AFCA The Coaches' Trophy after winning the BCS title game vs LSU at the Mercedes-Benz Superdome.

Arkansas was on its best two-year run in more than 40 years until Bobby Petrino decided to take a Sunday Harley ride with his mistress on — wait for it — April Fool's Day. The Hogs, though, aren't the Tide. As it settled on John L. Smith as a one-year interim, it was clear the program remained in a fragile state despite 21 victories and two major bowls in the past two seasons.

Crash a crystal trophy? Arkansas would kill for the chance.

"You described it perfectly," said Regina Gardner-Morgan, mother of Arkansas tailback Knile Davis. "Bobby Petrino has done so many things to work up to this point. He has that team just right and they're just about to go over the hill. Then something like this happens."

No worries, Hogs. Hit the button. This is your year, too, if you believe in the Great Reboot of 2012.

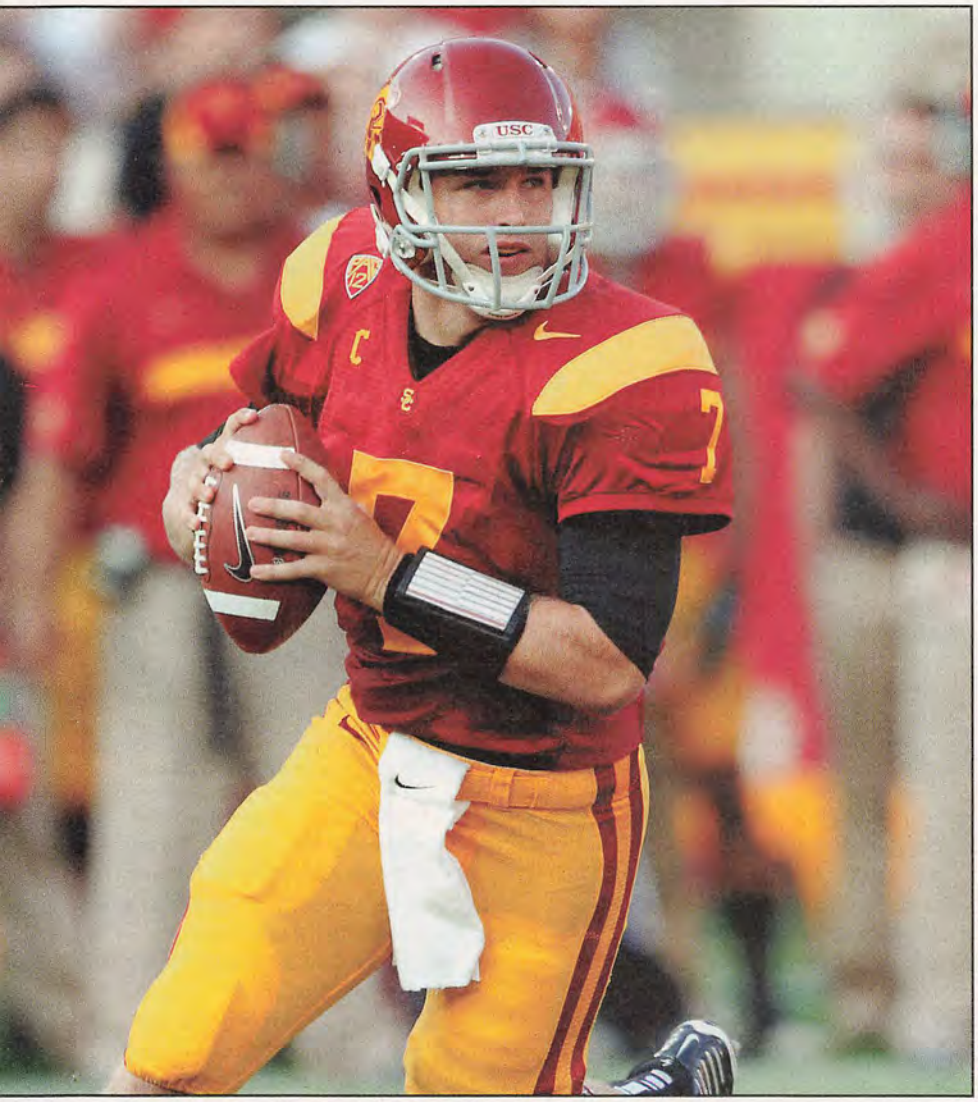


Photo by Steve Beyer

Barkley isn't finished making memories at USC

By Scott Wolf

It is not enough for USC quarterback Matt Barkley to be the Heisman Trophy frontrunner and potential No. 1 NFL draft pick. At the same time he gets hyped for a record-setting senior season, he's also looking to have a lot of fun.

When Barkley decided to return to USC he did not merely call coach Lane Kiffin. He orchestrated a dramatic moment, asking Kiffin to drive to his house just before Christmas.

After Kiffin walked in the house, Barkley handed him a handmade cardboard ornament that showed the pair embracing after the USC-Colorado game, where the star quarterback set the Trojans' single-game record for touchdown passes. A caption read, "2011 Great Memories."

The ornament barely impressed a cynical Kiffin, who said, "Cool ornament, Matt."

But Barkley, *Lindy's* Offensive Player of the Year, told Kiffin to turn it over and read another caption: "One more year. To the memories next year."

"I tried to be all sad," Barkley said of the way he was trying to fool Kiffin. "But I can't hold a straight face."

Or as Kiffin says, "Matt can't lie."

Barkley is one of the most driven and competitive athletes to play for USC in the past 15 years, but that is complemented by a boyish nature that does anything for a smile.

"I really did want him to stay," said his sister, Lainy, who also attends USC. "It's so fun being on campus with him."

Barkley's honesty and good nature (and his strong arm) are reasons USC feels so positive about its quest for a national title. And even he will not deny it.

"Looking at the team we have, it's definitely something special," Barkley said. "We're on the ride."

That is the type of comment that makes Kiffin wince because he likes to say, "You won't hear us talking about a national championship."

Barkley's teammates, however, love his directness.

"Matt always kept us energized because he is positive," former USC tailback Marc Tyler said. "He knew how to motivate us and willed us to win during games last season."

Being a motivator is a natural talent for Barkley, who always finds ways to keep things fresh and interesting.

Barkley took 15 of his teammates on a trip to Haiti to help build homes, a trip that illustrated Barkley's penchant for finding ways to make his teammates bond. It is a stark contrast to the last quarterback with this much hype at USC (Matt Leinart), who avoided much interaction with his teammates during his senior year.

"I've never been out of the country," USC defensive end Devon Ken-

nard said. "I think it was a great idea by Matt."

It is not an unusual trip for Barkley. After his sophomore year, with no bowl game because of NCAA sanctions, he went to Nigeria with his family to help the needy.

Going to Haiti appealed to Barkley more than being an NFL rookie. He knew he was going to be a top 10 draft choice but said, "I was meant to be at USC."

By the end of this season, Barkley appears to be meant to be USC's leader in career passing and total offense. He also will be the school's first three-time captain.

"He's got a chance to blow all these school records out of the water," Kiffin said.

USC will open its new $100-million football center this year named after legendary coach John McKay, but the reverence for Barkley already led to another possible title.

"The Matt Barkley Center sounds better," USC athletic director Pat Haden joked.

Barkley would turn down that offer. He might enjoy being in the spotlight, but dislikes over-the-top presentations. When he announced his return to USC, he was surprised the school arranged for the school band, song girls and the Heisman trophies flanking him inside Heritage Hall.

"That's not me," Barkley said. "That's not what I'm about. I just didn't want that image of myself. Hopefully, we'll add another (Heisman Trophy) here later, but as of now, we have some work to do first."

What Barkley wants is to win and go to a bowl game, preferably the BCS title game. He endured the Trojans' two-year bowl ban and wants his senior year to make up for NCAA sanctions.

"We've waited a long time and it's been frustrating sometimes not going to a bowl, but we never let it define us," Barkley said. "We can make this year worth remembering and we've got a team to do it. I can't wait."

OFFENSE

Matt Barkley

Montee Ball

Marcus Lattimore

Robert Woods

Sammy Watkins

Tyler Eifert

FIRST TEAM

Pos	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Yr.	School
QB	Matt Barkley	6-2	230	Sr.	USC
RB	Montee Ball	5-11	212	Sr.	Wisconsin
RB	Marcus Lattimore	6-0	218	Jr.	South Carolina
WR	Robert Woods	6-1	190	Jr.	USC
WR	Sammy Watkins	6-1	200	So.	Clemson
TE	Tyler Eifert	6-6	251	Sr.	Notre Dame
C	Barrett Jones	6-5	302	Sr.	Alabama
OL	Alex Hurst	6-6	340	Sr.	LSU
OL	Luke Joeckel	6-6	310	Jr.	Texas A&M
OL	Ricky Wagner	6-6	322	Sr.	Wisconsin
OL	Chance Warmack	6-3	320	Sr.	Alabama
PK	Caleb Sturgis	5-11	187	Sr.	Florida

SECOND TEAM

Pos	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Yr.	School
QB	Denard Robinson	6-0	195	Sr.	Michigan
RB	Knile Davis	6-0	226	Jr.	Arkansas
RB	Ray Graham	5-9	195	Sr.	Pittsburgh
WR	Keenan Allen	6-3	206	Jr.	Cal
WR	Marquess Wilson	6-4	183	Jr.	Washington State
TE	Philip Lutzenkirchen	6-5	250	Sr.	Auburn
C	Dalton Freeman	6-5	285	Sr.	Clemson
OL	Omoregie Uzzi	6-3	300	Sr.	Georgia Tech
OL	Gabe Ikard	6-4	295	Jr.	Oklahoma
OL	Chris Faulk	6-6	325	Jr.	LSU
OL	Taylor Lewan	6-8	302	Jr.	Michigan
PK	Dustin Hopkins	6-2	190	Sr.	Florida State

Barrett Jones

Alex Hurst

Luke Joeckle

Ricky Wagner

Chance Warmack

Caleb Sturgis

Photo by Bruce L. Schwartzman

There's No Limiting this Honey Badger

By Dennis Dodd

Tyrann Mathieu has seldom let boundaries define him. Why start now?

LSU's All-American cornerback starred at St. Augustine High in New Orleans' tough Orleans Parish. The practice field was a public park. The field was not lined. There were no goalposts. Still, he made it his own place to make the big time.

"It's part of the culture," said LSU running backs coach Frank Wilson, a "St. Aug" grad and New Orleans recruiting savant. "To those kids, they don't ever see it as, 'We don't have lines.' It's not an issue.

"It's not like they're sitting around there like, 'We're deprived.'"

So how hard could St. Aug be? Neighborhood residents, some casually smoking pot, would watch after the players at practice. On occasion, coach Dave Johnson would have to yell, "Get down" when a particularly dangerous police chase buzzed by.

Formally adopted last year, Mathieu was raised since the age of 5 by his aunt and uncle. FoxSports.com reported earlier this year that his birth father is serving time for murder.

Unlined field? Not a big deal.

More like unlimited potential for the tenacious Honey Badger.

So when Mathieu left Orleans Parish for Baton Rouge at age 17, he was ready for the big time. He flourished even prior to his freshman year. Usually casual 7-on-7 drills became a battleground for a kid longing to prove himself.

LSU veterans remember Mathieu making every play, tight-roping to stay inbounds after interceptions. Skinning knees, bruising elbows. This was a tryout in itself for the skinny 5-9 cover guy.

"He wanted to prove his worth," Wilson said. "To prove, 'I belong here.'"

We know now, don't we?

In a breakout 2011, Mathieu earned respect and that unforgettable nickname — Honey Badger. His accomplishments got him to New York City, where he finished fifth in the Heisman voting. He won the Bednarik Award for National Defensive Player of the Year. Mathieu became perhaps the best player at his position — certainly the one with the most impact — since Charles Woodson.

As a junior, he's *Lindy's* Preseason Defensive Player of the Year. Let's just say he's not stopping there.

"I just think mentally, in my mind, I was always a step ahead of the game," he said. "Not to take anything away from other players, I was just always confident in myself. I could make the best plays."

In redefining the position — at least in 2011 — Mathieu became master of what became dubbed "Badger Plays." In 26 career games, he has four interceptions, 11 forced fumbles, eight fumble recoveries and two punt returns for touchdowns. That adds up to 25 Badger Plays, almost one per game.

"It's almost like split personalities," Wilson said. "On the field, he has this bravado about himself, this swag, for lack of a better word. Off the field, he's humble and almost shy."

When the lights come on, he is the 5-9, 180-pound overachiever. The everyman Honey Badger.

Defensive coordinator John Chavis came up with the nickname returning from a game at West Virginia. A viral YouTube video sprang up showing how nature's real Honey Badger tenaciously

takes on dangerous prey.

Mathieu's cult of personality was such that the Heisman Trust even overlooked his one-game suspension during the season. Officially, LSU said it was for a violation of team rules. ESPN reported that Mathieu and two teammates had tested positive for synthetic marijuana.

"I think I got punished," Mathieu said. "I think I definitely did."

That barely diminished how the adopted son of a UPS truck driver burrowed his way into LSU hearts. With the season in the balance, he led the Tigers back from back-to-back double-digit deficits against Arkansas and in the SEC title game against Georgia.

With his team down 14-0 against the Hogs, Mathieu returned a punt 92 yards for a score. Georgia was up 10-0 in Atlanta, when Honey Badger once again sparked the comeback. A 62-yard punt return for a touchdown ended with Mathieu apparently not even scoring. Replays seemed to indicate that he tossed the ball to an official before crossing the goal line.

"I could see the referee looking at me kind of strange," Mathieu said. "I'll be sure the next time to make sure I cross the goal line."

When you're on that much of a roll, apparently even the replay booth is in awe.

Mathieu wasn't even allowed to return punts until his senior year at St. Aug. Because of his size, he hadn't been a star prospect on the camp circuit. But Wilson saw something. Working for Tennessee at the time, Wilson begged then-coach Lane Kiffin to offer Mathieu. No go.

To get him more attention, Wilson suggested to Johnson — now at Tulane — to feature Mathieu. Basically, Johnson created a few ways to make Mathieu's uncommon skills readily apparent. Then, Mathieu garnered some invitations to summer camps, where he became a national-level recruit.

"Unfortunately, I can't take a knife and cut him open and allow you to see the heart that was in him," Wilson said. "You can't measure what he has."

In a way, fans, media and teammates already have.

DEFENSE

Sam Montgomery

Kawann Short

Star Lotulelei

Brandon Jenkins

Jarvis Jones

Manti Te'o

FIRST TEAM

Pos	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Yr.	School
DL	Sam Montgomery	6-4	245	Jr.	LSU
DL	Kawann Short	6-3	310	Sr.	Purdue
DL	Star Lotulelei	6-4	325	Sr.	Utah
DL	Brandon Jenkins	6-3	260	Sr.	Florida State
LB	Jarvis Jones	6-3	241	Sr.	Georgia
LB	Manti Te'o	6-2	255	Sr.	Notre Dame
LB	Gerald Hodges	6-2	233	Sr.	Penn State
DB	Tyrann Mathieu	5-9	175	Jr.	LSU
DB	David Amerson	6-3	194	Jr.	NC State
DB	T.J. McDonald	6-3	205	Sr.	USC
DB	Eric Reid	6-2	208	Jr.	LSU
P	Brad Wing	6-3	184	So.	LSU

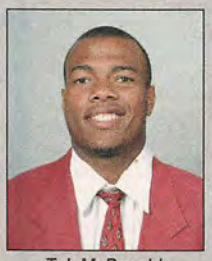
SECOND TEAM

Pos	Name	Ht.	Wt.	Yr.	School
DL	William Gholston	6-7	275	Jr.	Michigan State
DL	Alex Okafor	6-4	260	Sr.	Texas
DL	Joe Vellano	6-1	285	Sr.	Maryland
DL	Barkevious Mingo	6-5	240	Jr.	LSU
LB	Chase Thomas	6-4	245	Sr.	Stanford
LB	A.J. Klein	6-2	244	Sr.	Iowa State
LB	Khaseem Greene	6-1	220	Sr.	Rutgers
DB	Johnny Adams	5-11	175	Sr.	Michigan State
DB	Nigel Malone	5-10	185	Sr.	Kansas State
DB	Robert Lester	6-2	210	Sr.	Alabama
DB	Bacarri Rambo	6-0	218	Sr.	Georgia
P	Ryan Allen	6-2	215	Sr.	Louisiana Tech

Gerald Hodges

Tyrann Mathieu

David Amerson


T.J. McDonald

Eric Reid

Brad Wing

PLAYER RATINGS

QUARTERBACKS

Robinson adds 'leader' to his role as UM star

DENARD ROBINSON

Photo by Scott Boehm

The wide, effervescent smile that once defined Denard Robinson as much as his lightning-quick feet isn't as omnipresent as it once was.

The grin is still part of the package, evidence that the Michigan quarterback is as calm as on the first play from scrimmage in his career, when he turned a mishandled snap into a improvisational touchdown sprint.

But time, along with self-analysis and refinement, has changed Robinson.

The once shy personality has been replaced with an assertive demeanor. Once all smiles, Robinson is now businesslike and focused.

Although outside criticism persists, suggesting he doesn't have what it takes to play quarterback at the next level, Robinson remains focused on what time he has left in Ann Arbor. That would be the job description for his senior season, which requires him to take charge and hold his teammates accountable. That is, to be less of a pupil and more of a teacher.

"He's taking on more of a leadership role, and that's something that's exciting for me," offensive coordinator Al Borges said. "That's exciting for all of us."

Once more comfortable in the back of the room, Robinson is at now the head of the pack, willing to step to the forefront to help deliver the Wolverines' first Big Ten championship since 2004.

"I don't do a lot of yelling and patting people on the butt," Robinson said. "Sometimes, you have to get up in them, help them out and give them encouragement.

"You can't always be nice to them — I can't always have a smile on my face."

That face has also been the face of Michigan football since he took over at quarterback in 2010. The facial expressions have evolved over time.

Last season, a change in offensive philosophy changed Robinson's main duties, challenging him to run less and evolve into a more complete quarterback.

But there were growing pains. As Michigan flourished during an 11-2 season, capped by a Sugar Bowl victory, Robinson struggled with consistency. Despite flashes of brilliance, Robinson completed only 55 percent of his passes and was intercepted 15 times.

"That's not acceptable as a quarterback," Robinson said.

Borges, who adjusted his philosophies to accommodate Robinson's skills, impressed on his star quarterback that things had to change: It's time to eliminate turnovers and connect on more passes.

"He's made a marked improvement," Borges said. "There are still errors here and there, but they're less. As he goes and understands better and better, you're going to get a better product."

And when he doesn't meet the standard, it's Robinson — not Borges — who does the correcting.

With the extra effort, Robinson became more decisive and improved his accuracy, cutting down how much he threw off his back foot.

He also took a step forward as a leader.

The trait isn't one that comes naturally to the normally soft-spoken Robinson, whose teammates once struggled to understand him in the huddle. But over time, he made an impression on those around him.

"He has been more outgoing this season," receiver Roy Roundtree said. "Being a quarterback, that's what it takes, because everyone is looking up to the quarterback. We take real impact in being a senior and taking leadership — just like (last year's) seniors did.

"We're just trying to accomplish something better."

For Robinson, making his team better means making himself better. While remaining the focal point of his team and the school's resident Big Man On Campus — even earning him a shout-out from visiting President Barack Obama — Robinson has made self-improvement a main priority.

Both as a quarterback and a leader.

Ask how much his passing has improved, and Robinson characterizes the change as night and day. Bring up his tendency to be more vocal, and his all-business persona appears, understanding it's now part of who he is.

"I'm taking on a leadership role, trying to be the best quarterback I can be for the team," Robinson said. "Right now, I'm just trying to get better at everything."

And that's got everyone around him smiling from ear to ear.

— Jeff Arnold

TOP QUARTERBACKS

RK	NAME	CLASS	COLLEGE
1.	**Matt Barkley**	Sr.	USC
	Enters season with 9,054 passing yards, 80 TDs ... and looking for a ring.		
2.	**Denard Robinson**	Sr.	Michigan
	Who cares if he might not be a next-level QB? He's a thrill-maker.		
3.	**Tyler Wilson**	Sr.	Arkansas
	Sky's the limit, but his two lowest passing days came vs. LSU, Bama.		
4.	**Geno Smith**	Sr.	West Virginia
	Facing better competition, but a repeat (4,385 yards, 31 TDs) is doable.		
5.	**Landry Jones**	Sr.	Oklahoma
	Has 12,379 career yards and something to prove after late-season slump.		
6.	**Aaron Murray**	Jr.	Georgia
	With 35 TD passes, just needs 14 to set Georgia school record.		
7.	**Collin Klein**	Sr.	Kansas State
	Such a dynamic runner, we almost put him on our all-purpose list.		
8.	**Tajh Boyd**	Jr.	Clemson
	The All-ACC QB is just scratching his potential after 33-TD season.		
9.	**Tyler Bray**	Jr.	Tennessee
	Has the arm that makes scouts drool ... now, he needs to win a big game.		
10.	**Logan Thomas**	Jr.	Virginia Tech
	The one-time reluctant QB set school mark with 3,482 total yards in '11.		
11.	**Keith Price**	Jr.	Washington
	More than kept pace with RG III in wild, wild Alamo Bowl loss.		
12.	**James Franklin**	Jr.	Missouri
	Had 3,846 total yards last year in Big 12. What's the SEC conversion rate?		
13.	**AJ McCarron**	Jr.	Alabama
	If Saban says the word, title-winning QB can carry more of the load.		
14.	**Casey Pachall**	Jr.	TCU
	Super debut as starter (2,911 yards, 25 TDs), with top WRs coming back.		
15.	**EJ Manuel**	Sr.	Florida State
	Never got launched as full-time starter last year (injuries, inconsistent).		
16.	**Bryn Renner**	Jr.	North Carolina
	Strong, accurate thrower led ACC in passing efficiency (159.4 rating).		
17.	**Braxton Miller**	So.	Ohio State
	Urban says he loves Miller's "work ethic" ... and about 100 other things.		
18.	**Taylor Martinez**	Jr.	Nebraska
	If he truly has fixed some of the deficiencies in his throwing motion ...		
19.	**Seth Doege**	Sr.	Texas Tech
	Huge numbers, but tailed off in the second half of the season.		
20.	**Jeff Tuel**	Sr.	Washington State
	Betting he holds off Connor Halliday for the keys to Leach's attack.		
21.	**Mike Glennon**	Sr.	NC State
	Big finish gave him 31 TDs passes; only Philip Rivers had more at State.		
22.	**Alex Carder**	Sr.	Western Michigan
	Carrying the flag for MAC QBs; averaged 322.8 yards per game in 2011.		
23.	**Derek Carr**	Jr.	Fresno State
	David Carr's kid bro should thrive in more of a spread look for 'Dogs.		
24.	**Connor Shaw**	Jr.	South Carolina
	Went 8-1 as starter, got better in read-option, didn't vex Spurrier.		
25.	**Zach Mettenberger**	Jr.	LSU
	Maybe he belongs on list, maybe not. Will be fascinating, either way.		

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SIGNATURE

PLAYER RATINGS

RUNNING BACKS

Ball returns to be better than last year's No. 1 RB

MONTEE BALL

Photo by Joe Robbins

Nobody came up to his face and said it, but Montee Ball knows some people were tempted to do so.

When the Wisconsin running back made the surprising decision to return for his senior year, he read and heard a lot of comments about what a huge mistake he was making.

How could he possibly improve on his 2011 season, when he was a Heisman Trophy finalist and led the Badgers to a second straight Rose Bowl? What about the risk of injury? Didn't he know running backs have notoriously short NFL shelf lives and shouldn't waste carries at the college level?

In announcing his decision to return, Ball admitted he was making "a pretty huge gamble."

While he knew all of the arguments against returning, they were trumped by two things he couldn't get out of his mind.

The first was outdoing an NFL Draft evaluation that projected him as a third-round pick. "I do believe I'm better than the third round," he said.

The second was the four-year commitment he made to the Badgers when he signed.

"My character speaks for itself," Ball said in the spring. "I'm true to my word. That's why I decided to stay here and help this team win. I signed a letter of intent to stay (four years)."

Ball told the running backs of his decision the day before the Rose Bowl, then informed the rest of the team in the locker room, following the heartbreaking 45-38 loss to Oregon.

For a while, it appeared as if Ball might be the only one returning. Six assistant coaches bolted for new jobs in January. Wisconsin sent a school-record eight players to the scouting combine, the second-highest total of any school in the country.

But Ball placed his trust in Badgers coach Bret Bielema and weathered the turmoil. Bielema found new coaches, and the Badgers go into the season hoping to make school history with a third consecutive Big Ten title.

"From day one, when I told (Bielema) to his face, I decided to stay, I had a lot of faith in him — and I still do," Ball said. "He picked the right coaches. They're really doing a great job finding a bunch of young players who are going to help us."

Ball's show of faith was a strong declaration about the program's direction. He also backed up his vow to get better with his performance in winter workouts. Strength coaches set up six individual stations, where players competed one-on-one in a variety of agility drills. Ball went undefeated.

"He was challenged more than anybody," running backs coach Thomas Hammock said. "He won every one. He was always at the front of the line, pushing the guys."

Ball worked in the spring to polish minor flaws in his game, focusing on pass protection and becoming even more explosive out of cuts.

"What I've seen right here (in the spring), Montee will be a better player," Bielema said.

Ball led the nation with 1,923 rushing yards last season, and his 39 total touchdowns tied the NCAA record set by Barry Sanders in 1988. Bielema said Ball could be a better all-around player in 2012, even if he doesn't match his gaudy 2011 statistics.

"He's not trying to produce the same numbers," Bielema said. "He's not trying to do anything other than try to win football games and play his best football."

And those critics, who said he was crazy for coming back? They provide even more motivation for Ball's relentless pursuit of improvement.

"It's a lot of fuel," he said.

Hammock tells his players, "The enemy of great is being good." Ball refuses to be satisfied and is determined to drag his teammates along with him.

"That's what I'm striving to be — great," he said. "You don't know how hard I'm going to work and how hard I'm going to push these players to make this thing work. You never know what a player is capable of doing."

— Tom Mulhern

TOP RUNNING BACKS

RK	NAME	CLASS	COLLEGE
1.	**Montee Ball**	Sr.	Wisconsin
	A 2011 Heisman finalist after rushing for 1,923 yards and 33 TDs.		
2.	**Marcus Lattimore**	Jr.	South Carolina
	Let's assume a healthy knee; punishing runner will rip through SEC.		
3.	**Knile Davis**	Jr.	Arkansas
	Remember, he had 1,028 yards in final seven games of 2010 season.		
4.	**Ray Graham**	Sr.	Pittsburgh
	Was nation's second-leading rusher before knee injury at midseason.		
5.	**Joseph Randle**	Jr.	Oklahoma State
	Scatback seeks same open spaces with new weapons at QB, WR.		
6.	**Giovani Bernard**	So.	North Carolina
	All-ACC freshman had 1,253 yards and 13 touchdowns.		
7.	**Fitzgerald Toussaint**	Jr.	Michigan
	Ready to build off sensational second half of the 2011 season.		
8.	**Stepfan Taylor**	Sr.	Stanford
	Had "quiet" consecutive 1,000-yard seasons in Andrew Luck's shadow.		
9.	**Robbie Rouse**	Sr.	Fresno State
	Big-time workhorse; carried 36 times for 169 yards vs. Nebraska.		
10.	**Andre Ellington**	Sr.	Clemson
	Rushed for 1,178 yards last season; needs a full year of health.		
11.	**Rex Burkhead**	Sr.	Nebraska
	Not as flashy as some, but he's good for north of 1,300 yards again.		
12.	**John White IV**	Sr.	Utah
	As a JC transfer last season, set a school record with 1,519 rushing yards.		
13.	**Kenjon Barner**	Sr.	Oregon
	Main man now? Went for 939 yards and 11 TDs as backup last season.		
14.	**Eddie Lacy**	Jr.	Alabama
	From Mark Ingram to Trent Richardson ... and here's the next Bama star.		
15.	**Zach Line**	Sr.	SMU
	Rushed for at least 82 yards in all 10 games before injury late in 2011.		
16.	**Zac Stacy**	Sr.	Vanderbilt
	The SEC's leading returning rusher; darted for 1,193 yards, 14 TDs.		
17.	**Christine Michael**	Sr.	Texas A&M
	Oft-injured and coming off ACL tear, but his ceiling is as high as any.		
18.	**Cierre Wood**	Sr.	Notre Dame
	Bigger focus of offense with QB in transition; 1,102 rushing yards in 2011.		
19.	**Silas Redd**	Jr.	Penn State
	Needs to be a constant for Lions amid change to Bill O'Brien's offense.		
20.	**Isaiah Crowell**	So.	Georgia
	Touted recruit was SEC Freshman of the Year with 850 yards.		
21.	**Curtis McNeal**	Sr.	USC
	Bulked up to help durability; averaged 6.9 yards a carry last year.		
22.	**Le'Veon Bell**	Jr.	Michigan State
	Potential for more carries after 948 yards, 13 TDs in a time-share.		
23.	**Onterio McCalebb**	Sr.	Auburn
	Little guy can do it all, and should get a bigger workload this season.		
24.	**Perry Jones**	Sr.	Virginia
	His pass-catching skills (48 receptions last year) help set him apart.		
25.	**LSU's quartet**	n/a	LSU
	Take your pick: Michael Ford, Spencer Ware, Kenny Hilliard, Alfred Blue.		

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PLAYER RATINGS

RECEIVERS

'The Robert Factor' keeps Trojans looking downfield

USC wide receiver Robert Woods was a consensus All-American and finalist for the Biletnikoff Award last season, but if he needs motivation for his junior season, he needs to look no further than the comments of his coach, Lane Kiffin.

The day after USC defeated UCLA, 50-0, in the season-finale, Kiffin said Woods was "the second-best receiver" on the team, behind Marqise Lee.

TOP WIDE RECEIVERS

RK	NAME	CLASS	COLLEGE
1.	**Robert Woods**	Jr.	USC
	Can line up anywhere and create a mismatch; 111 catches last year.		
2.	**Sammy Watkins**	So.	Clemson
	Freshman season: 82 catches for 1,219 yards and 12 touchdowns.		
3.	**Keenan Allen**	Jr.	Cal
	Had 98 catches for 1,342 yards last season with half-brother at QB.		
4.	**Marquess Wilson**	Jr.	Washington State
	Uneven spring, but big-play guy has to be the focus of Mike Leach attack.		
5.	**Marqise Lee**	So.	USC
	So dangerous after the catch; should become an all-time USC great.		
6.	**Justin Hunter**	Jr.	Tennessee
	Last season's torn ACL won't stop him from becoming SEC's best.		
7.	**Kenny Stills**	Jr.	Oklahoma
	Maturing player with big personality and Ryan Broyles' shoes to fill.		
8.	**Tavon Austin**	Sr.	West Virginia
	Inside WR had great spring after four-TD game vs. Clemson in bowl game.		
9.	**Cobi Hamilton**	Sr.	Arkansas
	Numbers will soar as Tyler Wilson's primary target this time around.		
10.	**Terrance Williams**	Sr.	Baylor
	A playmaker for the new QB: 59 catches, 957 yards, 11 TDs in '11.		
11.	**Da'Rick Rogers**	Jr.	Tennessee
	First-round potential, but has had his share of off-field problems.		
12.	**Stedman Bailey**	Jr.	West Virginia
	Gotta love his speed, playmaking (12 TDs) and 17.8 yards per catch.		
13.	**Malcolm Mitchell**	So.	Georgia
	Look good in the spring ... at corner? No worries, will catch plenty as WR.		
14.	**Ryan Swope**	Sr.	Texas A&M
	Can he replicate 89 catches, 1,207 yards without Tannehill ... and in SEC?		
15.	**DeAndre Hopkins**	Jr.	Clemson
	Dabbled in hoops, focused on football now; 124 catches in two years.		
16.	**Tavarres King**	Sr.	Georgia
	Has a gear that can go get plenty of deep passes from Aaron Murray.		
17.	**Josh Boyce**	Jr.	TCU
	Came up big vs. Boise last season; finished 2011 with 998 yards, nine TDs.		
18.	**Emory Blake**	Sr.	Auburn
	Deep threat averaged 17.0 yards per catch last season.		
19.	**Conner Vernon**	Sr.	Duke
	Only player in ACC history with multiple seasons of 70-plus catches.		
20.	**Odell Beckham**	So.	LSU
	LSU's new go-to guy will run down deep balls from Zach Mettenberger.		

TOP TIGHT ENDS

RK	NAME	CLASS	COLLEGE
1.	**Tyler Eifert**	Sr.	Notre Dame
	Earned some All-America honors last season (63 catches, 803 yards).		
2.	**Philip Lutzenkirchen**	Sr.	Auburn
	Makes the circus catches, blocks and comes through in the clutch.		
3.	**Jacob Pedersen**	Jr.	Wisconsin
	Made eight TD catches last season and is blossoming as a blocker.		
4.	**Austin Seferian-Jenkins**	So.	Washington
	Terrific athlete who also played Husky hoops; ready for monster season.		
5.	**Jake Stoneburner**	Sr.	Ohio State
	Remember Aaron Hernandez at Florida for Meyer? That's Stoneburner.		

*Not rated due to spring suspension: Darius Johnson, SMU

ROBERT WOODS

Photo by John Pyle

It was an odd comment. Woods set the conference receiving record (111), and led the team in receiving yards (1,292) and touchdown catches (15).

Yet, in the Trojans' rout of the Bruins, while Woods was catching 12 passes, Lee was catching 13. While Woods was amassing 113 yards and two touchdowns, Lee was piling up 224 yards and two scores. On that night, Lee was unbelievable.

"I respect what Coach Kiffin said," Woods said. "I just want to be healthy and 100 percent this year. Then I can show everyone what I'm capable of doing when I'm pain free."

Woods, you see, played with an ankle injury that bothered him the *entire* season. Even with the bad ankle, Woods did things most receivers fail to do with two healthy wheels. Just one example: He caught a short pass against Arizona and turned it into an 82-yard touchdown en route to 255 yards receiving against the Wildcats.

"He makes a lot of plays that make me look good," USC quarterback Matt Barkley said. "He's really easy to play with because he is always where he needs to be. I can depend on him every play if I need to. We have a special relationship that way."

Having an experienced playmaker like Woods, and an up-and-comer like Lee, gave Barkley two reasons to come back for his senior season.

From his first day at USC, Woods displayed special tendencies, walking everywhere with his playbook and learning the offense faster than the other freshmen. He and Barkley were immediately on the same page.

"We always had our timing down," Woods said. "It's like playing catch with someone. It's real natural."

Woods underwent ankle surgery after last season and, to ensure he is healthy this year, did not participate in spring practice.

With teams now worried about Lee, it might be impossible to double-team Woods. The duo's combined receptions (184) and receiving yards (2,435) were the most by a pair of USC receivers in a single season.

Kiffin called opposing teams' double-coverage "The Robert Factor."

"He helps us in ways I don't think people understand," Kiffin said. "Even if he only has eight receptions in a game, they're trying to take him away and it's allowing all these other guys to make plays."

Woods opened the season catching a school-record 17 passes against Minnesota, drawing ever-increasing attention from defenses.

"What's really amazing, even after all the attention they gave him, he had 33 catches in the first three games," Kiffin said.

But Woods is not just one of the nation's top receivers, he's one of the hungriest.

"There were times when Coach Kiffin said I might not play in games (because of injuries)," Woods said. "I remember everyone wanted to know if I would play against Oregon. I knew I would play. But I also knew I wasn't at my best.

"I have no doubts I will be at my best this year."

Whatever Woods does, the big question for USC fans is whether Woods will return for his senior season in 2013?

"If the NFL is there, of course you have to look into it," Woods said. "But Matt and (safety) T.J. McDonald set the standard, returning for their senior year. Me and (linebacker) Dion Bailey and a lot of guys were talking. That should be the new trend, getting your degree."

If that is what Woods really thinks, Kiffin will have no problems bestowing any title the wide receiver wants.

— Scott Wolf

PLAYER RATINGS

OFFENSIVE LINEMEN

Aggies tackle is no joke to opponents

After graduating a semester early from Arlington (Texas) High, offensive lineman Luke Joeckel — perhaps the biggest prize of Texas A&M's 2010 recruiting class — enrolled in January 2010, along with his twin brother Matt, a quarterback prospect for the Aggies.

TOP CENTERS

RK	NAME	CLASS	COLLEGE
1.	**Barrett Jones**	Sr.	Alabama
	Outland Trophy winner takes on a new position on Bama's talented OL.		
2.	**Dalton Freeman**	Sr.	Clemson
	All-ACC center has started 36 games in his career.		
3.	**Khaled Holmes**	Sr.	USC
	How about an All-American combination at QB and center for USC?		
4.	**Ben Habern**	Sr.	Oklahoma
	Missed spring with neck injury but will be back to help lead standout OL.		
5.	**Joe Madsen**	Sr.	West Virginia
	Hasn't missed a start in his career; led team in knockdown blocks in '11.		
6.	**Travis Swanson**	Jr.	Arkansas
	Will be third-year starter; the up-front centerpiece for a prolific offense.		
7.	**T.J. Johnson**	Sr.	South Carolina
	Started all 40 games of career, with postseason awards along the way.		
8.	**Braxston Cave**	Sr.	Notre Dame
	Missing last four games helped him decide to return for fifth year.		

TOP GUARDS

RK	NAME	CLASS	COLLEGE
1.	**Chance Warmack**	Sr.	Alabama
	Even with Barrett Jones at center, Warmack might be Bama's best OL.		
2.	**Omoregie Uzzi**	Sr.	Georgia Tech
	Earned All-ACC honors and checked out draft status before returning.		
3.	**Gabe Ikard**	Jr.	Oklahoma
	Also excelled at center when Ben Habern was out last season.		
4.	**Alvin Bailey**	Jr.	Arkansas
	Was in the doghouse in the spring ... but has All-SEC talent.		
5.	**Larry Warford**	Sr.	Kentucky
	Two-time second-team selection to the All-SEC team.		
6.	**Jonathan Cooper**	Sr.	North Carolina
	Was rated NFLDraftScout's No. 1 senior OG prospect in spring.		
7.	**Chris McDonald**	Sr.	Michigan State
	Athletic lineman whose brother, Nick, has spent past two years in NFL.		
8.	**Lane Taylor**	Sr.	Oklahoma State
	With 36 career starts, leads a revamped line in front of freshman QB.		

TOP TACKLES

RK	NAME	CLASS	COLLEGE
1.	**Alex Hurst**	Sr.	LSU
	A coaches' All-SEC selection who mans the right side for the Tigers.		
2.	**Luke Joeckel**	Jr.	Texas A&M
	Huge potential will be tested by the big and speedy SEC pass rushers.		
3.	**Ricky Wagner**	Sr.	Wisconsin
	Has nicely followed in LT footsteps of Joe Thomas and Gabe Carimi.		
4.	**Chris Faulk**	Jr.	LSU
	Should be a eying a first-round draft grade with a big junior year.		
5.	**Taylor Lewan**	Jr.	Michigan
	Kid with big personality who is drawing comparisons to UM greats.		
6.	**Oday Aboushi**	Sr.	Virginia
	Cavs have had three first-round OTs since 2006 ... one more?		
7.	**D.J. Fluker**	Jr.	Alabama
	Might have most potential on OT list; looking lean at a scant 350 pounds.		
8.	**Justin Pugh**	Sr.	Syracuse
	All-Big East performer; has blocked for two different 1,000-yard RBs.		

LUKE JOECKEL

Photo by Doug Holleman

With Jerrod Johnson and Ryan Tannehill entrenched at quarterback entering the spring of 2010, Matt Joeckel had no illusions of playing early in his collegiate career. Because of deficiencies in the offensive line, however, Luke was regarded as a likely candidate to work his way into the starting lineup as a true freshman ... at the high-profile spot of left tackle, no less.

But when spring ball started, Joeckel was embarrassed on the practice field. His hopes of starting immediately — as well as most of his long-term dreams — were initially dashed when he could rarely even *touch* the rush linebacker in front of him.

"It was a joke, but it wasn't funny to me," the well-spoken Joeckel recalled. "I was right out of high school trying to make a big impression, and there were many times I couldn't even touch the guy.

"I'm dead serious. I remember thinking, 'Man, is this the kind of talent I'm going to see every week in the Big 12?' I was pretty happy when we started playing games and realized that not everybody I faced was like Von Miller."

Well, yeah. Miller, remember, led the nation in sacks in 2009, won the Butkus Award in 2010, and was the NFL's Defensive Rookie of the Year in 2011 after a stellar debut season with the Denver Broncos. Additionally, Miller may have placed Joeckel on the fast track in terms of his development as an offensive lineman.

"My freshman year was hard, especially in terms of just getting used to the speed compared to high school," Joeckel said. "But blocking Von Miller in spring practices helped me a ton. I had a lot of offside penalties when I first came in, but after four or five games, I started getting better."

Joeckel, a 6-6, 315-pound left tackle, soon realized that nobody else could block Miller one-on-one, consistently, either. So upon starting all 13 games as a true freshman in 2010, Joeckel struggled at times, but made major strides as the Aggies won their last six regular-season games before falling to LSU in the Cotton Bowl.

Joeckel continued his impressive development as a sophomore, emerging as the premier player on an offensive line that allowed the fewest sacks (nine) in the Big 12 in 2011.

"I felt much more comfortable last year," he said. "This year, I plan on getting better and better and building on what I've done so far."

Joeckel and fellow junior right tackle Jake Matthews, son of NFL Hall of Famer Bruce Matthews, form one of the most impressive tackle tandems in Texas A&M history. As the Aggies prepare to enter the SEC in 2012, the offensive line is undoubtedly the team's strength.

Joeckel says he is fully aware that dominant defensive line play has been one of the key characteristics of the premier teams in the SEC for many years. Nevertheless, Joeckel is confident he is prepared for anything or anyone he will face this year and beyond.

"Going to the SEC, we are playing against the best competition in the country, and it is a league known for its great defensive linemen," said Joeckel, whose father, David, was an offensive lineman at Texas Tech.

"But I am looking forward to that challenge. Jake and I are looking forward to going against those great defensive ends in the SEC. Personally, I feel like I've already played against the best of the best in Von.

"That guy is a total freak in a good way, and I was not surprised at all that he was the Defensive Rookie of the Year. He really helped me develop in a hurry and prepared me for whatever I'll face next."

— Rusty Burson

PLAYER RATINGS

DEFENSIVE LINEMEN

For LSU's Montgomery, it's 'all about the mindset,' and more

SAM MONTGOMERY

Photo by Bruce L. Schwartzman

In the quest to become "a great LSU player," junior right defensive end Sam Montgomery said it takes "a dominant defensive mentality. ... It's all about mindset."

If that were the only requirement, there would be no shortage of "great LSU players."

Then, again, given the talent-rich depth of the Tigers, it could be argued they don't lack for great players. Yet, only a select few stand out from the rest, and that's where Montgomery fits in.

Not only is he strong "between the ears," which is how he classified the proper mental disposition, he has the physical ability to become an NFL first-round draft choice. At 6-4, 245 pounds, he has the size to disrupt the opposition and the speed and footwork to create havoc.

What's more, he works diligently to enhance those physical skills.

Defensive coordinator John Chavis said Montgomery "brings some special things to our defense in terms of a guy who can play the run well and also rush the passer."

Montgomery's statistics support that claim. Last season, he registered a team-high nine sacks, the third-highest total in the Southeastern Conference. That matched the fourth best single-season total in school history.

His 13.5 tackles for losses ranked fourth in the SEC. He finished with 49 tackles overall, tops among LSU's returning linemen.

No wonder he was selected first-team All-America by the Football Writers of America, and was a Ted Hendricks Defensive End of the Year finalist.

Montgomery considered jumping early to the NFL, but decided against it because he wanted to earn his degree next spring. He also wanted to help his young backups prepare to start when he does leave.

Besides, in the meantime, he's enjoying himself and college. He redshirted his first year and then started the first five games of 2010 before his season was cut short by a knee injury. He had 18 tackles with two sacks, leading coaches to name him to the SEC All-Freshman Team.

Then came his dominant redshirt sophomore season. As much as he has accomplished, he has only 16 starts in his career, so an additional year of experience is likely to help him in the eyes of the NFL.

He'll team with Barkevious Mingo, LSU's other starting junior defensive end, to keep the Tigers among the nation's best defenses. They ranked second last season, limiting foes to just 261.5 yards and 11.3 points per game.

"We haven't lost a beat," Montgomery said. "The front looks good. We just need to step it up some. We'll work on that during the summer."

Namely, LSU has to be just a notch better than Alabama, which edged the Tigers in both defensive statistical categories and embarrassed them in the BCS national championship game, 21-0. LSU stopped Alabama in overtime during the regular season, 9-6, but was no match for the Crimson Tide in the postseason.

Montgomery said he and his teammates have moved on. "January 9th was put to bed a long time ago."

He did add a qualifier to that statement: "It's been in our minds. But just as a reminder that for every game you have to be ready for every last moment. ... As far as the bad taste in my mouth, I just look forward to the next time we play them."

That would be Nov. 3 in Tiger Stadium. There will be plenty of football to play before then, and LSU will need Montgomery performing as well as ever to handle the rigors of the SEC.

Montgomery has paid special attention to his hand work and his quickness off the line, saying he's committed to doing whatever necessary to finish his college career right.

That would entail finishing off the season one game better than last season ... which is where *Lindy's* ranks the Tigers heading into the fall.

— Dave Moormann

TOP DEFENSIVE ENDS

RK	NAME	CLASS	COLLEGE
1.	**Sam Montgomery**	Jr.	LSU
	Was a FWAA first-team All-American after posting nine sacks on great D.		
2.	**Brandon Jenkins**	Sr.	Florida State
	Has helped lead resurgence of FSU D with 36.5 career tackles for loss.		
3.	**William Gholston**	Jr.	Michigan State
	Reminiscent of former Spartan Julian Peterson ... freakishly athletic.		
4.	**Alex Okafor**	Sr.	Texas
	Big Oak was first-team All-Big 12 with 14 TFLs, including seven sacks.		
5.	**Joe Vellano**	Sr.	Maryland
	Great motor; moving to end in 3-4 look. Would rate even higher at DT.		
6.	**Barkevious Mingo**	Jr.	LSU
	Almost unfairly quick off the edge, had five QB hurries in SEC title game.		
7.	**Stansly Maponga**	Jr.	TCU
	Another great TCU pass rusher; nine sacks and five forced fumbles in '11.		
8.	**Jadeveon Clowney**	So.	South Carolina
	Nation's best recruit in 2011 playing like he wants to be top pick in 2014.		
9.	**James Gayle**	Jr.	Virginia Tech
	Has potential to be as good a defender as there is in the ACC.		
10.	**Corey Lemonier**	Jr.	Auburn
	Tigers' defense starts with Lemonier (9.5 sacks, five forced fumbles).		
11.	**John Simon**	Sr.	Ohio State
	Has 28 career tackles for loss and leads Urban's talented D-line.		
12.	**Jackson Jeffcoat**	Jr.	Texas
	Rangy and sudden off the line, as his 21 TFLs last season suggest.		
13.	**Dion Jordan**	Sr.	Oregon
	Just like the rest of the Ducks: Built for speed and looking for a mismatch.		
14.	**Devin Taylor**	Sr.	South Carolina
	At 6-7, has a huge wingspan to get in QB's air space; six sacks last year.		

TOP DEFENSIVE TACKLES

RK	NAME	CLASS	COLLEGE
1.	**Kawann Short**	Sr.	Purdue
	Has rare quickness, pass-rush skills for interior lineman (17 TFLs).		
2.	**Star Lotulelei**	Sr.	Utah
	Was voted by Pac-12 offensive linemen as the league's best DL last year.		
3.	**Jonathan Hankins**	Jr.	Ohio State
	Made 67 tackles last season and had a big spring for new coaches.		
4.	**John Jenkins**	Sr.	Georgia
	At 351 pounds, he is the classic immovable object on the D-line.		
5.	**Aaron Donald**	Jr.	Pittsburgh
	Moved around the front last year when he had 16 TFLs and 11 sacks.		
6.	**Jesse Williams**	Sr.	Alabama
	Won't be a big stats guy, but invaluable as Bama's new man in middle.		
7.	**Bennie Logan**	Jr.	LSU
	Made 57 tackles for the nation's second-best defense in 2011.		
8.	**Nikita Whitlock**	Jr.	Wake Forest
	Not the prototype: He's 5-11, 260, and just zips past interior linemen.		
9.	**Baker Steinkuhler**	Sr.	Nebraska
	Son of Nebraska legend has been good; senior season could be special.		
10.	**Jordan Hill**	Sr.	Penn State
	Coach Bill O'Brien says Hill is one of better DTs he's been around.		

PLAYER RATINGS

LINEBACKERS

Rare talent has Irish looking for rare season

Notre Dame defensive coordinator Bob Diaco knows linebackers such as Manti Te'o only come around every so often.

Diaco says the only defensive player he has been around that compares to Te'o is Chris Long, the former Virginia star and current St. Louis Rams defensive end.

"He was unique," said Diaco, who coached linebackers and was special teams coordinator at Virginia from 2006 to 2008. "I hadn't been around someone like him before or since Manti. It's like every 10 years, 20 years."

MANTI TE'O

Photo by Robin Alam/Icon SMI

Te'o has been special — or as Diaco calls him, "rare" — since he arrived at Notre Dame as the nation's No. 1 defensive prospect out of high school.

The 6-2, 255-pound senior started 10 of 12 games as a freshman and recorded 63 tackles and 5.5 tackles for loss.

He followed up by more than doubling his tackles as a sophomore — 133, including 9.5 for loss, as he started every game.

Te'o continued to rack up impressive numbers as a junior, notching 128 stops with 13.5 for loss. And he added another element — sacks.

After recording only two sacks in his first two seasons, Te'o had five last year.

"I can improve on everything as a leader, as a football player," Te'o said. "I can just improve on everything and in every facet of my game."

There was no guarantee Te'o was going to give Notre Dame all four years of his eligibility. He contemplated entering the NFL Draft after the Irish finished 8-5 for a second straight season and lost 18-14 to Florida State in the Champs Sports Bowl.

He was projected as high as a first-round draft selection, but he didn't want to leave Notre Dame without his degree or feeling like he gave the university and football program everything he has.

"I'm just going to try to maximize everything I got, maximize my potential," Te'o said. "I'm going to make sure that when I leave here I can honestly say I gave it my all."

But while he gives it his all, Te'o understands that being one of the most high-profile players at Notre Dame can create some unwanted attention. He said he will block out bad thoughts as he plays his final college season.

"Honestly, it's a lot of pressure, and sometimes it's pressure you don't want," Te'o said. "Sometimes it carries over to your family, and people say stuff about your family.

"It hurts. You are just a regular 21-year-old, who has loving parents, and people are saying stuff about you and your family. It comes with the territory I guess.

"You always have to keep a clear mind and remember who you are and do what you do. And not pay attention to all the critics and guys who praise you. You have to stay focused, level-headed, and you will be fine."

Te'o returns to a defense that has plenty of talent, even after emerging star defensive end Aaron Lynch left the program during spring practice. Lynch said he wanted to return home to south Florida.

Notre Dame's defensive line features ends Stephon Tuitt and Kapron Lewis-Moore and nose guard Louis Nix III. Te'o will be joined in the linebacker rotation by Dan Fox, Carlo Calabrese, Ishaq Williams and Danny Spond.

In addition, safeties Jamoris Slaughter and Zeke Motta will keep the defensive backfield strong, as new cornerbacks Lo Wood, Josh Atkinson and Bennett Jackson settle in.

With a strong supporting cast, Te'o says he is thinking of only one thing in his final season — going out on top.

"I just want to win," Te'o said. "I want to do whatever it takes to win. I know I have guys around me, and this team wants to win. It's a special team. I'm not just saying that because it is my senior year."

— Tony Krausz

TOP INSIDE LINEBACKERS

RK	NAME	CLASS	COLLEGE
1.	**Manti Te'o**	Sr.	Notre Dame
	Hasn't disappointed on or off field. Career: 324 tackles, 28.5 for loss.		
2.	**A.J. Klein**	Sr.	Iowa State
	Co-Big 12 Defensive POY; had 14 tackles in upset of Oklahoma State.		
3.	**Chris Borland**	Jr.	Wisconsin
	The best middle linebacker in Big Ten ... again (143 tackles, 19 for loss).		
4.	**Arthur Brown**	Sr.	Kansas State
	Ex-Miami Hurricane flew around for 101 stops in all-league season.		
5.	**C.J. Mosley**	Jr.	Alabama
	Former Freshman All-American will be a star in an expanded role.		
6.	**Kevin Reddick**	Sr.	North Carolina
	Vocal leader could be another first-round defender from Carolina.		
7.	**Alec Ogletree**	Jr.	Georgia
	Be hard-pressed to find a quicker ILB; 52 tackles in eight games in '11.		
8.	**Nico Johnson**	Sr.	Alabama
	Hasn't had the full playing time to post big numbers ... but he will.		
9.	**James Morris**	Jr.	Iowa
	Made 110 tackles last season while splitting time inside and outside.		
10.	**Shayne Skov**	Sr.	Stanford
	ACL rehab was coming along fine in the spring; tough, tenacious player.		

TOP OUTSIDE LINEBACKERS

RK	NAME	CLASS	COLLEGE
1.	**Jarvis Jones**	Sr.	Georgia
	Big plays get noticed (13.5 sacks, 19.5 TFLs), but he's a complete package.		
2.	**Gerald Hodges**	Sr.	Penn State
	Former safety has great instincts moving forward and backward.		
3.	**Chase Thomas**	Sr.	Stanford
	Great size and pass-rushing ability off the edge (8.5 sacks last year).		
4.	**Khaseem Greene**	Sr.	Rutgers
	Big East co-Defensive Player of the Year after league-leading 141 stops.		
5.	**Jonathan Brown**	Jr.	Illinois
	Final seven games: 78 tackles, 13.5 for loss, four sacks, two recoveries.		
6.	**Mike Taylor**	Sr.	Wisconsin
	First-team All-Big Ten player who made 150 tackles last season.		
7.	**Jake Knott**	Sr.	Iowa State
	Returning All-Big 12 player is physical, tough; has 268 career tackles.		
8.	**Jelani Jenkins**	Jr.	Florida
	Fits the profile as athletic linebacker who should be making huge plays.		
9.	**Denicos Allen**	Jr.	Michigan State
	A playmaker (11 sacks, 18.5 TFLs) on excellent Michigan State defense.		
10.	**Sean Porter**	Sr.	Texas A&M
	Porter (17 TFLs, 9.5 sacks) and DE Damontre Moore fit in fine in SEC.		
11.	**Kenny Tate**	Sr.	Maryland
	2010 All-ACC safety returning from ACL injury suffered in the 2011 season.		
12.	**A.J. Johnson**	So.	Tennessee
	Made 80 tackles en route to consensus Freshman All-America honors.		
13.	**Dion Bailey**	So.	USC
	Ready for bigger honors after being Pac-12 Defensive Freshman POY.		
14.	**Shaun Lewis**	Jr.	Oklahoma State
	An impact player from the start, with 17.5 career tackles for loss.		

PLAYER RATINGS

DEFENSIVE BACKS

Wolfpack craving a replay of Amerson's baker's dozen

DAVID AMERSON

Photo by Jeff Siner/Charlotte Observer/MCT

The replay looped on the videoboard at Carter-Finley Stadium during North Carolina State's spring game.

There was Wolfpack cornerback David Amerson's 65-yard interception return in the Belk Bowl ... three times, three different angles, played over and over. Every time it was a touchdown.

It was Amerson's favorite interception of a conference-record 13 in 2011.

"That's a tough one to top," Amerson said of the big play against Louisville.

"It was for the (ACC) record; it went for a touchdown, and it helped us win the game."

Amerson, who didn't have an interception as a freshman, had two in the 31-24 bowl victory. The pick-six in the third quarter became the deciding points in the game and eclipsed former North Carolina cornerback Dre Bly's conference mark of 11 interceptions from 1996.

Amerson added one more interception on Louisville's final possession of the game to give him 13 for the season. Al Worley of Washington is the only player in Division I-A history with more, 14 in 1968.

That kind of a season would be tough for anyone to top. What do you do for an encore after breaking a 73-year-old school record, setting a conference record, and leading the country in interceptions?

It's a question the junior from Greensboro, N.C., has already thought about in a whirlwind offseason of collecting All-American honors and the Jack Tatum Award as the nation's top defensive back.

First things first for Amerson: Stay humble. The bright-eyed, soft-spoken, under-recruited local product gets more attention on campus — and some good-natured trash talk from his teammates — but he's focused on following up his spectacular 2011 season.

"As quick as you go up, you can go down," Amerson said. "I have to have the same hungry attitude. I can't be satisfied with where I'm at."

Amerson attributes his success to his soft hands — he played receiver in high school — and a knack for the ball. If he can touch the ball, it's usually his. At 6-3, he's tall for a corner, but he still has quick feet and good hip turn, qualities the best cover corners have.

It's the combination of all the qualities — the athletic ability and the IQ — that makes Amerson so successful, NC State coach Tom O'Brien said.

"He has a great feel for the game and a great sense of anticipation," O'Brien said.

Plus, the coach added: "He just has a knack for making plays."

Amerson's attitude is even more impressive to O'Brien. After the season, Amerson's teammates voted him team MVP. When he stood up for the acceptance speech, he told his teammates that he would be defined by what he does with the rest of his career, not what he did in 2011.

"He has his mindset in the right direction," O'Brien said.

But will anyone throw in Amerson's direction this season? He had four games in 2011 with at least two interceptions, with game-deciding touchdown returns against Virginia and Louisville. Senior safety Earl Wolff said Louisville tested Amerson only twice in the bowl game ... and both passes ended up his hands.

"Any time the ball comes his way, he can make a play," Wolff said.

Given the design of the Wolfpack's defense — Amerson lines up as the field corner, always to the wide side of the field — O'Brien says Amerson will get tested, just not as much as last year.

Amerson worked on his strength and footwork in the offseason, but maybe he needed to work on his patience. He is prepared to see fewer passes and, likely, come up with fewer interceptions.

Thirteen, he admits, is a lot and there was some luck involved. But there's one stat he'll be counting on this season.

"As long as we get the wins, I'll be fine," he said.

In NC State's case, the wins usually follow the highlight-reel interceptions.

— Joe Giglio

TOP CORNERBACKS

RK	NAME	CLASS	COLLEGE
1.	**Tyrann Mathieu**	Jr.	LSU
	Plays bigger than he is, knows the right time to be aggressive.		
2.	**David Amerson**	Jr.	NC State
	Can't expect him to grab 13 INTs again, but he'll always affect the game.		
3.	**Johnny Adams**	Sr.	Michigan State
	All-Big Ten performer active and fast; three INTs and four sacks in 2011.		
4.	**Nigel Malone**	Sr.	Kansas State
	Had seven picks last season in his first year out of junior college.		
5.	**Johnthan Banks**	Sr.	Mississippi State
	Has 12 career INTs; best Bulldogs DB in about a decade.		
6.	**Nickell Robey**	Jr.	USC
	Small and quick (5-8, 165), he's All-Pac-12 vs. waves of tall, talented WRs.		
7.	**Micah Hyde**	Sr.	Iowa
	Versatile DB stepped up in spring, asked to be leader and play more man.		
8.	**Brodrick Brown**	Jr.	Oklahoma State
	Makes up for lack of height (5-8) with athleticism and on-ball skills.		
9.	**E.J. Gaines**	Jr.	Missouri
	Defended 18 passes last season to set a single-season school mark.		
10.	**Merrill Noel**	So.	Wake Forest
	Was a fearless freshman who broke up a school-record 19 passes.		
11.	**Demontre Hurst**	Sr.	Oklahoma
	A veteran of 27 starts; had 55-yard INT return for TD vs. Texas in '11.		
12.	**Xavier Rhodes**	Jr.	Florida State
	Numbers a bit down last year, but he's a big, physical player with upside.		

TOP SAFETIES

RK	NAME	CLASS	COLLEGE
1.	**T.J. McDonald**	Sr.	USC
	Another Trojan who stayed; like dad, Tim, he's an All-American.		
2.	**Eric Reid**	Jr.	LSU
	By our count, one of six LSU juniors who could be first-rounders in 2013.		
3.	**Robert Lester**	Sr.	Alabama
	After nearly leaving for NFL, came back to lead reloaded secondary.		
4.	**Bacarri Rambo**	Sr.	Georgia
	Downgraded a bit because he has to serve early season suspension.		
5.	**John Boyett**	Sr.	Oregon
	Brings a linebacker mentality to the position; made 108 stops last year.		
6.	**Tony Jefferson**	Jr.	Oklahoma
	Will be parked at FS this year after moving all over last season.		
7.	**Kenny Vaccaro**	Sr.	Texas
	Big hitter and game-changer, and yet another standout UT DB.		
8.	**Matt Elam**	Jr.	Florida
	SS gets into the backfield (11 TFLs) and is also fine in man coverage.		
9.	**Lamarcus Joyner**	Jr.	Florida State
	At 5-8, covers a lot of ground from SS spot; second-team All-ACC in 2011.		
10.	**Hakeem Smith**	Jr.	Louisville
	All-Big East safety already a veteran of 25 career starts.		
11.	**Earl Wolff**	Sr.	NC State
	Has forced seven fumbles and made 204 tackles in past two years.		
12.	**C.J. Barnett**	Jr.	Ohio State
	Led the Buckeyes with 75 tackles last season.		

PLAYER RATINGS

ALL PURPOSE

Oregon's 'Black Mamba' goes for the jugular

The Black Mamba is the fastest and one of the deadliest land snakes in the world.

Named for the black coloration of its mouth, the Black Mamba uses a variety of quick strikes while attacking its prey. Each bite delivers a lethal injection of deadly venom.

TOP KICKERS

RK	NAME	CLASS	COLLEGE
1.	**Caleb Sturgis**	Sr.	Florida
	Made 46 of 60 FGs for career with five coming from 50 yards or more.		
2.	**Dustin Hopkins**	Sr.	Florida State
	Man with the golden cleats was a Groza Award finalist last season.		
3.	**Quinn Sharp**	Sr.	Oklahoma State
	Best foot in the nation: Has been FWAA All-American as PK and P.		
4.	**Brett Maher**	Sr.	Nebraska
	Was 19 of 23 on FG attempts last season; only one miss from inside 50.		
5.	**Drew Alleman**	Sr.	LSU
	Made 16 of 18 FGs last season; knows what it's like to kick in the clutch.		
6.	**Zach Hocker**	Jr.	Arkansas
	Better than 80 percent in career (37 of 46 FGs) and great kickoff man.		
7.	**Michael Hunnicutt**	So.	Oklahoma
	Stability in the Sooners' kicking game: 21 of 24 FGs, long of 53.		
8.	**Andre Heidari**	So.	USC
	When Barkley and Co. aren't scoring TDs, he hits: 15 of 17, long of 50.		

TOP PUNTERS

RK	NAME	CLASS	COLLEGE
1.	**Brad Wing**	So.	LSU
	2011 All-American kept Bama pinned all day in regular-season game.		
2.	**Ryan Allen**	Sr.	Louisiana Tech
	Won the Ray Guy Award (46.1-yard average, 22 inside the 20).		
3.	**Quinn Sharp**	Sr.	Oklahoma State
	Has posted a 45.8-yard average across three seasons.		
4.	**Jackson Rice**	Sr.	Oregon
	Ducks didn't punt enough for Rice to qualify nationally with 45.9-yard average.		
5.	**Tress Way**	Sr.	Oklahoma
	2011: Placed 34 of 63 punts inside the 20 with only six touchbacks.		
6.	**Brian Schmiedebusch**	Jr.	Bowling Green
	Ranked sixth nationally in punting; BG was fifth in net punting.		
7.	**Ian Campbell**	Sr.	UTEP
	Has two-year average of 45.6 yards after transferring from JC.		
8.	**Dylan Breeding**	Sr.	Arkansas
	Yet another reason (45.3-yard average) why Hogs put foes on their heels.		

TOP ALL PURPOSE

RK	NAME	CLASS	COLLEGE
1.	**De'Anthony Thomas**	So.	Oregon
	With the right amount of touches, a Heisman isn't out of the question.		
2.	**Justin Gilbert**	Jr.	Oklahoma State
	An excellent CB; on kick returns, it's one move, track speed, TD.		
3.	**Andre Debose**	Jr.	Florida
	Big-play WR has three kick-returns for touchdowns in 40 attempts.		
4.	**Jamal Miles**	Sr.	Arizona State
	Three return TDs in 2011; a threat on laterals and quick passes.		
5.	**Greg Reid**	Sr.	Florida State
	One of top corners in the ACC and has three career punt return TDs.		
6.	**Dennis Johnson**	Sr.	Arkansas
	Helped fill in for RB Knile Davis; was second in SEC in all-purpose yards.		
7.	**Dustin Harris**	Sr.	Texas A&M
	Led nation in punt returns and is part of rotation at cornerback.		
8.	**Tyler Lockett**	So.	Kansas State
	WR had two kick return TDs; is son of former K-State star Kevin Lockett.		

De'ANTHONY THOMAS

Photo by Kirby Lee-US PRESSWIRE

Oregon sophomore De'Anthony Thomas is sort of the football equivalent. He's devastating to defenses in versatility and impact to the point that the 5-9, 173-pound running back/wide receiver/kick returner has carried the moniker "Black Mamba" since elementary school.

"It's been following me throughout my whole career," Thomas said. "I got it from my game on the field being compared to a snake."

As a freshman in 2011, Thomas slithered, darted and struck his way to 18 touchdowns while taking the term "versatility" to extremes.

Many running backs catch passes out of the backfield. Wide receivers get the occasional carry. Each position produces fine kick returners. But few college football players have ever been so effective from all three positions.

Thomas was the only player in the country last year to surpass 400 yards in rushing, receiving, and kickoff return yardage. And while the Ducks had a Heisman Trophy candidate at running back in LaMichael James, Thomas still ranked 11th nationally in all-purpose yards (159.6 per game).

Now, Thomas is better versed in the Ducks' no-huddle, spread-option offense and is in the process of adding bulk to his slight frame.

"I think his role will expand for us, and it's exciting because he's such a talented kid," Oregon coach Chip Kelly said. "You still kind of catch yourself going, 'Wow!'"

Many have expressed a similar reaction while watching Thomas perform since he first touched a football.

Thomas received the nickname "Black Mamba" at age 11 while playing football for rapper Snoop Dogg's "Snoop Youth Football League" in Los Angeles. While at Crenshaw High School, he ran the 100 meters in 10.57 seconds. He is typically the fastest player on the field ... so, he has only the end zone on his mind.

"I expect to score, but you never know how fast a guy is, so you always want to go as fast as you can no matter what," Thomas said.

Thomas originally committed to USC as a senior before changing his mind weeks before Signing Day, 2011. Essentially, Thomas turned down the chance to be the next Reggie Bush at USC to become the first De'Anthony Thomas at Oregon.

Playing behind running backs LaMichael James and Kenjon Barner allowed Thomas to learn, while Kelly and offensive coordinator Mark Helfrich schemed ways to take advantage of his skills.

Kelly held one-on-one meetings with Thomas during the season to accelerate the learning process.

The strategy produced mind-blowing numbers for a freshman:

- Rushing: 55 carries for 595 yards (10.8 average), seven touchdowns.
- Receiving: 46 receptions, 605 yards (13.2 average), nine touchdowns.
- Kickoff returns: 36 for 983 yards (27.3 average), two touchdowns.
- Punt returns: 3 for 52 yards (17.3 average).

That's 140 touches for 2,235 yards (a 16-yard average), with his 18 touchdowns.

So what's next for Thomas? Try more touches for potentially more yards and more touchdowns. He will back up Barner this season at running back, but he'll play plenty at receiver, and of course return kicks.

"He's got the whole package both at wide receiver and running back," Kelly said. Whether or not Thomas' body could handle a larger workload out of the backfield remains a concern, although he said he plans to add five to seven pounds of muscle by the fall while maintaining his speed. Oregon running backs coach Gary Campbell said it's difficult to gauge Thomas' ability to handle punishment at the collegiate level because defenders have rarely gotten a clean hit on him.

Getting to Thomas is easier said than done. Just ask Oregon cornerback Terrance Mitchell.

"He's a quick dude. ... He's like a cat," Mitchell said. "So you have to be like a cat just like him."

Maybe, but a cat is no match for a Black Mamba.

— Aaron Fentress

UNIT RANKINGS

TOP10 BACKFIELDS

1. ARKANSAS

Here's how this works: We could rank the best quarterback groups in the country, and we could separately rate the running back units, but we like to mash them together and mix it up. It's more fun to look at who has the best quarterbacks *and* running backs ... so any one-hit wonders in either department need not apply.

The backfield has to be the complete package.

Which brings us to Arkansas.

The double-shot of quarterback Tyler Wilson and running back Knile Davis — both third nationally in our player position rankings — gives the Razorbacks two realistic All-Americans and two first-round draft picks for next season.

Wilson fired for 3,638 yards last season and is still coached by a Petrino (offensive coordinator Paul, not head coach Bobby), while interim coach John L. Smith will serve as caretaker of the offense and let Wilson flourish.

While Davis was sitting last season with an ankle injury, Dennis Johnson and Ronnie Wingo filled in nicely, and both are back. But the Hogs are eager to see the return of Davis, who ran for 1,322 yards in 2010 and can be a difference-maker in the SEC.

2. MICHIGAN

Quarterback Denard Robinson leaves plenty to be desired as a passer, but he's as slippery as any running back in the country and just as able to completely take over a game with his feet. The senior has 3,229 career rushing yards and 35 touchdowns on the ground, which makes backfield mate Fitzgerald Toussaint jealous. He didn't earn the featured role until a month or so into last season, but then he finished with 678 yards in the final five regular-season games. And the Wolverines have high hopes for sophomore power back Thomas Rawls, all while scheming cool ways to get Robinson and backup Devin Gardner on the field at the same time.

3. USC

The Trojans' best option is to have the nation's best quarterback throw to the nation's best pair of receivers, but there is nothing wrong with Matt Barkley handing off to senior Curtis McNeal, who emerged around the middle of last season to finish with 1,005 yards. What's iffy is the depth, with no experience behind Barkley and uncommonly little behind McNeal, especially after a spring knee injury to Tre Madden.

4. GEORGIA

The Dawgs' Aaron Murray has had back-to-back 3,000-yard passing seasons and led Georgia to the SEC title game last year. Isaiah Crowell wasn't disappointing as a touted freshman last season — other than the two disciplinary suspensions — as he ran for 850 yards. Needing depth, the Bulldogs added early enrollee freshman Keith Marshall, a national top 50 recruit whose quickness and instincts impressed coach Mark Richt in the spring.

Tyler Wilson

Photo by RD Moore

5. KANSAS STATE

Senior quarterback Collin Klein is built like a linebacker and runs like a tailback. Last season, he tied Ricky Williams' Big 12 record with 27 rushing touchdowns, while setting school QB records for rushing yards (1,141), carries (317) and points (162). Klein also passed for 1,918 yards. Junior running back John Hubert rushed for 970 yards. And the system works because of effective blocking from senior fullback Braden Wilson.

6. TCU

The Horned Frogs are the only team in the nation that had three running backs over 700 yards in 2011: junior Waymon James (875, six touchdowns), senior Ed Wesley (726, six TDs) and senior Matthew Tucker (702, 12 TDs). Wesley ran for 1,078 yards in 2010. Junior Casey Pachall, who broke Andy Dalton's records for completions, yards and completion percentage, rallied his team from behind four times in 2011.

7. CLEMSON

The Tigers have another year of experience in the up-tempo offense and the returning personnel to burn rubber in the opener against Auburn (some reconstruction along the offensive line, notwithstanding). Quarterback Tajh Boyd passed for 3,828 yards last season, and running back Andre Ellington (1,178 yards, 11 touchdowns) returned after considering the NFL.

8. OKLAHOMA

Senior Landry Jones is the Sooners' leader in every career passing category and is about to become the school's career leader in victories. Hard-pounding senior Dominique Whaley (105 yards per game and nine TDs before a broken ankle) and junior scatback Roy Finch (605 rushing yards and 34 catches) are a nice 1-2 punch. Sophomore quarterback Blake Bell, Jones' backup, rushed for 13 TDs, and junior fullback Trey Millard plays all over the field. Expect major contributions from running back transfer Damien Williams, who led junior college last season with 1,931 yards and 30 touchdowns.

9. NEBRASKA

Gritty Rex Burkhead has a nose for the goal line (17 total touchdowns last year) and twice had at least 35 carries in a game. Junior quarterback Taylor Martinez will continue to frustrate defenses with his ability to slash-and-dash in the ground attack. The question is whether or not he'll continue to frustrate those in scarlet and cream with his inaccuracy.

10. ALABAMA

This final spot could have gone to North Carolina, maybe Oregon, even Fresno State — hello, Wisconsin! — but the tie goes to the national champions. Cool customer AJ McCarron is easy to appreciate at quarterback, and Tide fans will cling to him ever more tightly after the late-April transfer of backup Phillip Sims. New faces in the backfield — Eddie Lacy, Jalston Fowler, Dee Hart and early enrollee freshman T.J. Yeldon — have varying styles and fresh legs.

TOP10 RECEIVERS

1. USC

Robert Woods and Marqise Lee aren't just the best pair of receivers in the country this season, they could be the best pair of receivers in just about any season.

Here are just the raw numbers from last year: 184 catches for 2,435 yards and 26 touchdowns. And that was when Woods was a sophomore and Lee a true freshman. They just might be better now. Woods lines up everywhere in different formations, as USC is always probing the matchups. But not even Woods is as dangerous after the catch as Lee.

Who is behind these guys? Does it matter? Yes, transfers have thinned the backup spots, with one of the beneficiaries being sophomore George Farmer — giving USC a first-team trio of receivers who were all teammates at Gardena (Calif.) Serra High School.

2. CLEMSON

Sophomore Sammy Watkins was, like USC's Lee, a freshman sensation last season, overshadowing Tigers' junior DeAndre Hopkins. Hopkins got the message, giving up playing hoops for Clemson last winter and having a fabulous spring practice, able to add strength and weight and better battle for balls. Watkins won't get worse after catching 82 passes for 1,219 yards and 12 touchdowns, and look for Hopkins to improve on his 72-catch season.

OFFENSE

3. WEST VIRGINIA

Senior Tavon Austin led the nation with 2,574 all-purpose yards (198 per game), including a school-record 101 catches for 1,186 yards and eight touchdowns in the Big East. Junior Stedman Bailey is a top deep threat, averaging 17.8 yards per catch with seven 100-yard games in 2011 (school record 1,279 yards and 12 TDs). Junior Ivan McCartney chipped in 49 catches for 585 yards and three scores.

4. TENNESSEE

The Vols get better in a hurry with the return of rangy 6-4 Justin Hunter, known as "Gumby" for his ability to contort and stretch for any pass within his significant leaping ability and wingspan. Hunter, who missed most of last season because of a knee injury, rejoins Da'Rick Rogers (67 catches, 1,040 yards, nine touchdowns), while both welcome talented newcomers, including JC star Cordarrelle Patterson.

5. OKLAHOMA

Junior Kenny Stills (61 catches in each of his first two years) and Jaz Reynolds (715 yards, 17.4 per catch last year) are returning starters, though both had the drops last season. However, the Sooners' best two receivers might be newcomers: junior college transfer Courtney Gardner and freshman Trey Metoyer, who was the top high school wideout in the nation in 2010. He played at prep school in 2011 and was the Sooners' best wideout in the spring.

6. WASHINGTON STATE

This is probably the deepest spot for the Cougars, which is the right way to be when head coach Mike Leach walks through that door. These receivers will post numbers, none moreso than junior star Marquess Wilson, who could become Leach's Michael Crabtree of the Northwest, although the coach was on Wilson's case this spring for a lack of effort. There was nothing wrong with Wilson's effort last season: 82 catches for 1,388 yards and 12 touchdowns.

7. ARKANSAS

A pipeline to the NFL hasn't depleted Tyler Wilson's targets. Wideout Cobi Hamilton and tight end Chris Gragg moved up the receiving hierarchy this spring, ready to cash their tickets. Sophomore Marquel Wade previewed his shifty skills in the return game last season and now will be a playmaker in the passing game.

8. FLORIDA STATE

Explosive sophomore Rashad Greene, who had 597 receiving yards and seven touchdowns last year, is a star in the making. He averaged 15.7 yards per catch. Five of the Seminoles' top six receivers return for quarterback EJ Manuel.

9. GEORGIA

Coach Mark Richt dared in the spring to move dynamic wideout Malcolm Mitchell to defense in order to shore up depth at cornerback. Turns out, the 6-1 sophomore has skills there, too. Maybe the coaches will play tug-of-war with Mitchell, maybe they share him, but Richt won't want to be without his best deep threat for too long. Senior Tavarres King keeps coming on, making 47 catches for 705 yards last season.

10. TEXAS TECH

The Red Raiders retain their top three pass-catchers from last season, led by Eric Ward, who picked up some second-team All-Big 12 honors last season after catching 84 passes for 800 yards and 11 touchdowns.

TOP10 OFFENSIVE LINES

1. ALABAMA

At the end of spring ball, Alabama had NFL-DraftScout's top-rated senior center (Barrett Jones), its third-rated senior guard (Chance Warmack), its third-rated junior tackle (D.J. Fluker) and its No. 1 sophomore tackle (Cyrus Kouandjio). Not much of that is a stretch, with Kouandjio muscling into the starting lineup and moving Jones to his third position in three years.

2. LSU

The Tigers have four returning starters, with the nation's best pair of tackles — Alex Hurst and Chris Faulk. Senior guard Josh Dworaczyk, who has started 26 games, is back after missing last season because of a knee injury. LSU isn't waiting on him. The depth is such that sophomore La'el Collins came out of spring with the starting job. For now.

3. OKLAHOMA

The Sooners have four returning starters (junior left guard Gabe Ikard, senior center Ben Habern, senior right guard Tyler Evans, senior right tackle-to-left tackle Lane Johnson) and a fifth (sophomore right guard Adam Shead) who started half the season. This group helped OU average 4.5 yards per carry and allowed only 11 sacks last season.

Robert Woods

Photo by John Pyle

4. TEXAS A&M

The Aggies might not be ready to hang with new SEC West pal LSU right away, but they don't have to concede much on the offensive line, especially at tackle. Luke Joeckel and Jake Matthews are junior three-year starters, having already graduated from what *Lindy's* described last season as "beasts in the making" to full-on monsters.

5. WISCONSIN

Despite routinely losing personnel to the NFL, the Badgers rarely get caught short-handed on the line. Ricky Wagner will keep the quarterback's blindside free from trouble, while Travis Frederick can dominate at guard or center. File this name away for the future: Dan Voltz, who impressed after enrolling in January as a freshman.

6. WEST VIRGINIA

Four full-time starters return, including senior center Joe Madsen, who has made 38 career starts and is one of the best in the country at his position. Left guard Josh Jenkins, who redshirted last season because of a knee injury, has 24 career starts.

7. NORTH CAROLINA

The Tar Heels bring back four starters, who still might be catching their breath from the fast-paced spring practices of new coach Larry Fedora. With left tackle James Hurst and left guard Jonathan Cooper having All-ACC talent, the smart money is on North Carolina getting in shape and being able to plow foes in the fourth quarter.

8. MICHIGAN STATE

The heart of the Spartans' offensive attack will be a thick front line led by guard Chris McDonald and tackle Fou Fonoti. Having one of the conference's most experienced lines will help ease the loss of all-conference pick Joel Foreman.

9. OKLAHOMA STATE

Three starters are gone to the NFL, but senior guard Lane Taylor (36 career starts) is a plow horse and senior guard Jonathan Rush (16 career starts) is back after a knee injury. Senior tackle Michael Bowie and Parker Graham each have five career starts. Even new center Evan Epstein is a senior.

10. TENNESSEE

This could be a reach. The Vols were a woeful running team last season, reflecting poorly on the line. This also could be a savvy projection, with five returning starters — not untalented, mind you — looking to make amends. If this pick doesn't work out, send your criticisms to Derek Dooley before UT pulls the plug on his university e-mail.

UNIT RANKINGS

TOP10 DEFENSIVE LINES

1. LSU

We'd like this group even better if it still had NFL early entry defensive tackle Michael Brockers, a first-round pick, but we're also pretty sure we can't rate the Tigers any higher than No. 1.

LSU had such depth last season — and still has so much of it — that end Barkevious Mingo started only four games ... and still had 15 tackles for loss, eight sacks and 11 quarterback hurries. Returning starting end Sam Montgomery had 13.5 tackles for loss, with nine sacks. Bennie Logan (57 tackles) is back at a tackle spot.

Our pals at NFLDraftScout.com projected in the spring that each of these juniors would be top 25 picks in the 2013 Draft. By that time, they should be wearing national championship rings.

2. FLORIDA STATE

FSU's defensive line is starting to look like many of the ones of yesteryear — the ones with Corey Simon, Derrick Alexander and Andre Wadsworth ... those kind of guys.

FSU didn't allow any of its final eight opponents last season to score more than 19 points, and let's credit a line that returns three starters. The Seminoles jumped to fourth last season in total defense — better than anybody outside of the SEC — and ranked second in rushing defense.

Senior end Brandon Jenkins, somehow not in the NFL yet after making 36.5 career tackles for loss, saw a dip in his stats last season, if only because of all the extra blocking attention. Junior end Bjoern Werner and senior defensive tackle Everett Dawkins will keep taking advantage.

3. SOUTH CAROLINA

The Gamecocks will put their defensive ends — 6-6 sophomore Jadeveon Clowney and 6-8 Devin Taylor — up against those in Baton Rouge and Tallahassee. Clowney, the nation's top recruit in 2011, had eight sacks and five forced fumbles last season while just running around and being an excitable freshman. He's smarter and stronger as a sophomore, when the coaches will also slide him inside, looking for mismatches. Senior Devin Taylor is an All-SEC-caliber pass rusher at the other end, while sophomore tackle Kelcy Quarles is coming off a Freshman All-American season.

4. GEORGIA

Nobody has nose guards like the Bulldogs, who have a talented pair of 350-pounders — give or take breakfast — in John Jenkins and Kwame Geathers. Coordinator Todd Grantham tinkered in the spring, using them in the same alignment, and not just at the goal line, an idea that has a chance to work because of Jenkins' athleticism. Let's just call this the biggest three-man front in America, including 309-pound end Abry Jones and 269-pound end Cornelius Washington, a speedy former outside linebacker.

5. TCU

Junior end Stansly Maponga is in the recent mold of TCU's undersized but super-quick pass rushers. He had nine sacks, 13.5 tackles for loss and five forced fumbles last season. Senior end Ross Forrest, a former walk-on, had six tackles for loss; sophomore defensive tackle David Johnson, a Freshman All-American in '11, had seven.

6. TEXAS

Senior Alex Okafor, a first-team All-American in 2011, needs to be in the discussion as the nation's best defensive end. On the other end, junior Jackson Jeffcoat was second-team All-Big 12. That duo combined for 15 sacks and 35 tackles for loss. At tackle, junior college transfer Brandon Moore could help immediately.

7. MICHIGAN STATE

No Jerel Worthy, no problem. William Gholston is one of the nation's best athletes on the edge, and fellow end Marcus Rush (yes, that's the last name we want for our defensive ends) drew national recognition for his freshman campaign. Their ability to get into the backfield (a combined 28 tackles for loss last season) will lessen the load on the interior line, where Anthony Rashad White had an impressive spring.

Tyrann Mathieu

Photo by Derick E. Hingle-US PRESSWIRE

8. OHIO STATE

All four starters return to a line that is looking to improve upon OSU's No. 50 national ranking in rushing defense. John Simon is one of the Big Ten's best and most reliable linemen; his 6-4, 317-pound teammate Johnathan Hankins might possess the most potential at the next level. They combined for 27 tackles for loss last season.

9. FLORIDA

Defensive end Ronald Powell's spring ACL tear was a blow, figuring to keep him out until at least October. Coach Will Muschamp still has dominant pieces to deploy in end Sharrif Floyd, who could move inside to tackle, and tackle Dominique Easley, who could slide outside to end. Such interesting options to have with guys who weigh around 300 pounds.

10. VIRGINIA TECH

The line returns intact for what has a chance to rank with the Hokies' finest defenses. Defensive end James Gayle leads the unit and should push for ACC Defensive Player of the Year honors.

TOP10 LINEBACKERS

1. GEORGIA

Jarvis Jones, who began his career at Southern California, was an All-American in his first season at Georgia last year, fitting in perfectly into the Bulldogs' 3-4 scheme. He's the NFL prototype for an outside linebacker — one of those get-into-the-backfield guys who go high in the first round. Jones had 13.5 sacks and 19.5 tackles for loss last season.

All of his linebacker pals are back, including Alec Ogletree, a former safety whose speed is a wonderful asset on the inside, especially when he's free to roam because those 350-pound nose guards keep blockers off of him.

2. IOWA STATE

Arguably the two best linebackers in the Big 12 — and one of the most productive tandems in the nation — play in Ames. Senior A.J. Klein (116 tackles, 7.5 for loss) was the Big 12's Co-Defensive Player of the Year in 2011, and senior Jake Knott (115 tackles, four forced fumbles) was also a first-team All-Big 12 pick.

3. ALABAMA

Dont'a Hightower is gone, taken in the first round of the NFL Draft, and Courtney Upshaw went high in the second round. Coach Nick Saban will just blow his whistle, start the assembly line and crank out more for 2013. It's called "NFL ready" ... and the Tide will

have two more in senior Nico Johnson and junior C.J. Mosley, while Saban carves out space in the rotation for all his former five-star recruits.

4. STANFORD

Stanford has four starters back in its 3-4 scheme, plus Shayne Skov, who is making his way back from a knee injury suffered early last season. The Cardinal was third nationally against the run last season — so these linebackers are active and tough — and outside linebacker Chase Thomas led the league with 17.5 tackles for loss. Trent Murphy had 10 TFLs on the other side.

5. WISCONSIN

Bucky brings back two of the Big Ten's top five tacklers — Mike Taylor (10.7 per game) and Chris Borland (10.2). Both earned first-team nods and are experienced enough to help the team bring along a new face to start opposite Taylor on the outside.

6. OREGON

Michael Clay is coming off a 102-tackle season from the weak side, with returning starter Boseko Lokombo doing more of the dirty work on the strong side. Middle linebacker Kiko Alonso has a chance to be dominating — that's defensive coordinator Nick Aliotti's word — and will be looking to build off his Rose Bowl performance, when he was Defensive Player of the Game.

7. PENN STATE

Linebacker U remains. First-team All-Big 12 performer Gerald Hodges is among the best in the nation, while Michael Mauti is inching his way toward 100 percent after rehabbing a torn left ACL (at least now he has a matching set of surgically repaired knees).

8. MICHIGAN STATE

Chris Norman has made 23 starts and is a veteran complement to fellow outside 'backer Denicos Allen, whose 11 sacks last season are the most among returning Big Ten defenders. Max Bullough controls the middle of the field as well as any Big Ten linebacker.

9. FLORIDA

The Gators can always count on Jonathan Bostic, a heady middle linebacker who led the team with 94 tackles last season — 10 for loss. The man with big-time NFL upside is Jelani Jenkins, but he first needs to translate that athleticism into more game-changing plays for Florida.

10. USC

It's an all-sophomore starting crew, with Pac-12 Defensive Freshman of the Year Dion Bailey on one side and Hayes Pullard on the other — they shared the team lead in tackles. Middle linebacker Lamar Dawson, who supplanted now-departed veteran Chris Galippo halfway through last season, further settled into a comfort zone and leadership role in the spring.

Jarvis Jones

Photo by Joe Robbins

TOP10 DEFENSIVE BACKS

1. LSU

You can't not love the Honey Badger. In two years, Tyrann Mathieu has 15 tackles for loss, including six sacks, 14 pass break-ups, four interceptions, 11 forced fumbles, eight recoveries and two punt return touchdowns. That's a busy, busy Badger. And he might not be the Tiger's best pure cover man, even after Morris Claiborne left early for the NFL.

While Mathieu is 5-9, Tharold Simon is 6-3, and he broke up 10 passes last season in a rotational role. "He looked like he was 6-7 because he's all arms and legs," an opposing SEC coach told *Lindy's*. "He looked like a damn spider."

Throw in All-America candidate Eric Reid at free safety ... and the Tigers could have the nation's top defensive back for the third year in a row, following Patrick Peterson and Claiborne. Take your pick.

2. NC STATE

The Wolfpack has been a big-play outfit in the past couple of seasons, leading the nation last year with 27 interceptions — an amazing 13 coming from cornerback David Amerson. He and rest of the starting secondary return for more in 2012, having combined for 114 career starts.

3. USC

Free safety T.J. McDonald pulled a Barkley by staying for his senior season. Consider McDonald the quarterback of the defense, and a terrific spring portends an All-America season. Nickell Robey, a feisty 5-8, is one of the top cornerbacks in the Pac-12 and helps make this one of the deepest units in an otherwise thin lineup.

4. TEXAS

Junior Carrington Byndom was first-team All-Big 12 last season, and teams with impressive sophomore Quandre Diggs as a pair of formidable corners. Senior SS Kenny Vaccaro, another first-team All-Big 12 performer, has a relentless flair that gives a needed edge to the Longhorns' defense.

5. GEORGIA

The Bulldogs, who swiped an SEC-best 20 passes last season, will have to get by early in the season without returning All-America safety Bacarri Rambo, who was suspended. Other defensive backs also will have to sit out for a bit, but the Dawgs will be at full strength for the bulk of their schedule.

6. ALABAMA

The Tide will use movable parts — deep and talented movable parts — around safety Robert Lester, whose return for his senior season provides a high baseline for confidence. Look for cornerback Dee Milliner and safety Vinnie Sunseri to excel in expanded roles.

7. OKLAHOMA

Junior Tony Jefferson, one of the Big 12's best tacklers, takes his 21 career starts to free safety. Senior safety Javon Harris, victimized deep throughout 2011, moves down low. Senior Demontre Hurst is one of the Big 12's best cover men and a fierce hitter, while junior Aaron Colvin, who has played all over the secondary, is maybe the Sooners' top defensive playmaker.

8. FLORIDA STATE

The Seminoles intercepted 16 passes and ranked 25th nationally in passing efficiency defense last year. Cornerbacks Xavier Rhodes and Greg Reid, and safety Lamarcus Joyner — all veterans, are honors candidates so expect similarly good results for FSU.

9. OKLAHOMA STATE

The cornerbacks are playmakers. Senior Brodrick Brown was first-team All-Big 12 in 2011, and junior Justin Gilbert was second-team. Junior free safety Daytawion Lowe led the Cowboys with 97 tackles and three forced fumbles.

10. MICHIGAN STATE

Yet another defensive strength for Michigan State. Johnny Adams is an All-America candidate, and Darqueze Dennard isn't shabby at the opposite corner. Safety Isaiah Lewis returned two of his team-leading four interceptions last year for touchdowns.

Illustration by Tim Williams

USC vs. MICHIGAN
For the good of the game?

BY ANTHONY GIMINO AND DENNIS DODD

THE SEC IS JUST TOO DOMINANT FOR THE REST OF COLLEGE FOOTBALL

What this college football season needs is a bolt of lightning. Or two. Actually, it might take a whole bucket full.

Because the way the SEC has had its way with the rest of college football lately, it's getting monotonous.

For everyone outside the SEC, the end of the college football season has turned into a horror story. Fans in the Midwest, Pacific Coast, Southwest and Northeast have been left shivering around a campfire listening to Nick Saban, with a flashlight under his chin, telling spooky tales of 300-pound defensive tackles who run like linebackers and suck the souls of opposing quarterbacks.

The SEC dominance, while profound, is getting old. It's time for the rest of college football to start shining its light.

The whole of college football needs the best conference in college football to punch each other out. This year, we need a bunch of two-loss SEC teams.

That the SEC has won six consecutive national titles is just great for the SEC, especially the state of Alabama. Good for the league. Well played. God bless.

Face it: That two SEC teams — LSU and Alabama — held a rematch in last year's national championship game wasn't so wonderful for the big picture. It resulted in the third-lowest TV ratings in the 14 years of the BCS and was a relative yawner of a game, a defensive slog.

Instead, picture a season in which Alabama beats LSU, Arkansas beats Alabama, Florida beats Georgia, South Carolina beats Florida ... you get the idea. The in-conference wreckage would be just enough that two teams from other conferences could stroll to Miami for the BCS Championship Game without having to fear LSU or Alabama or any of those other unbeatable SEC teams.

You know, something like USC vs. Michigan.

Those traditions. Those fan bases. Those quarterbacks. Those helmets. Those comeback stories — Michigan from its internal demons

of the Rich Rodriguez "era;" USC from its messy post-Pete Carroll transition.

Michigan, the winningest program in college football history, has never played in one of these BCS title games. The Trojans won one (just ask them), but the record book doesn't show it because it was vacated due to sanctions. Now, they are re-emerging from two years in lockup, as LA-sexy as ever.

Sorry, SEC. That matchup sounds like a double-shot of adrenaline compared to more yawn-twins from the land of smashmouth.

We get it. The SEC is the best. It will, indisputably, collectively, be the very best conference again this year. Bigger *and* better. But we can dream of some new blood, can't we?

At least we can until the first week of the season when, in Dallas, in Jerry Jones' man-cave, Michigan opens against ... Alabama.

CONFERENCE REALIGNMENT

Seven of the 11 conferences have a different look this season, including the addition of four programs to the Football Bowl Subdivision.

College football is about at halftime of the whole realignment movement.

Last season saw the expansion of the Pac-10 and Big Ten (as well as shuffling in the Mountain West and WAC). And we're still waiting for the final shoes to drop on ACC expansion (Pitt, Syracuse) and the ensuing waves of change that will lead to a geographically incongruent Big East (Boise State, San Diego State, Houston, SMU, etc.) and new looks for Conference USA and the Mountain West.

But, hey, one year at a time. For this year, here is how realignment affects your conference standings for 2012:

SEC (14 teams, 2 divisions)
In: Missouri (East), Texas A&M (West)

Big 12 (10 teams, no divisions)
In: TCU, West Virginia
Out: Missouri, Texas A&M

Big East (8 teams)
In: Temple **Out:** West Virginia

MAC (13 teams, 2 divisions)
In: UMass (East) **Out:** Temple

MWC (10 teams)
In: Fresno State, Hawaii, Nevada **Out:** TCU

Sun Belt (10 teams)
In: South Alabama

WAC (7 teams, no divisions)
In: Texas-San Antonio, Texas State
Out: Fresno State, Hawaii, Nevada

BCS MATCHUPS

The BCS National Championship Game heads to Miami. Here's how *Lindy's* sees the biggest games shaking out this season:

ROSE BOWL
TUESDAY, JAN. 1
PASADENA, CALIF. * ROSE BOWL
BIG TEN #1 VS. PAC-12 #1
LINDY'S PICK: MICHIGAN VS. OREGON

ORANGE BOWL
TUESDAY, JAN. 1
MIAMI * SUN LIFE STADIUM
ACC #1 VS. BCS AT-LARGE
LINDY'S PICK: FLORIDA STATE VS. LOUISVILLE

SUGAR BOWL
WEDNESDAY, JAN. 2
NEW ORLEANS, LA. * LOUISIANA SUPERDOME
SEC #1 VS. BCS AT-LARGE
LINDY'S PICK: ALABAMA VS. WEST VIRGINIA

FIESTA BOWL
THURSDAY, JAN. 3
GLENDALE, ARIZ. * UNIV. OF PHOENIX STADIUM
BIG 12 #1 VS. BCS AT-LARGE
LINDY'S PICK: OKLAHOMA VS. MICHIGAN STATE

BCS NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP GAME
MONDAY, JAN. 7
MIAMI * SUN LIFE STADIUM
BCS #1 VS. BCS #2
LINDY'S PICK: LSU VS. USC

HEISMAN WATCH

There is always a certain logic to handicapping the Heisman race in the preseason. Quarterback; Top 10 team; name recognition — they're the holy trinity of Heisman indicators.

Funny how the past three years have made pretzels out of our logic.

- Alabama running back Mark Ingram? Oh, he was a nice time-share running back ...
- Cam Newton? Merely a junior college transfer taking over an Auburn team that had lost five of its last eight games in 2009.
- Robert Griffin III? A Heisman winner at Baylor? Hahahahaha ...

In the age of constant highlights, we can't really be sure of anything anymore in the Heisman race, although we'll stick with as much logic as we can muster for now. Here are 10 players who, out of the gate, have the best shot:

1. Matt Barkley, QB, USC — All he has to do is match his numbers from last season (3,528 yards, 39 touchdowns) and get the Trojans to the BCS national title game (oh, is that all?) ... and the stiff-armed trophy is his.

2. Denard Robinson, QB, Michigan — Four of the past six Heisman winners have been dual-threat quarterbacks (Troy Smith, Tim Tebow, Newton, RG III). Robinson fits the bill, even as Michigan tries to squeeze more passing out of its attack. (Let him run, Brady!)

3. Montee Ball, RB, Wisconsin — Only one running back has won the Heisman this millennium (Ingram in 2009, when he benefitted from a championship team and a modest cast of competitors). For Ball to win, he just might have to get past 2,000 yards ... which he came within one long run of doing last season when he hit 1,923.

4. Geno Smith, QB, West Virginia — He's playing in a Dana Holgorsen-designed offense, so his numbers will rate with anybody in the nation. But he's not just a product of the system.

5. Landry Jones, QB, Oklahoma — Had one of the least memorable seasons for someone who passed for nearly 4,500 yards and 29 touchdowns. It's just that Jones' sophomore year was statistically superior, and the Sooners didn't live up to 2011's preseason No. 1 billing. Perhaps this is the year.

6. Tyrann Mathieu, DB/RET, LSU — The combination of "Badger Plays," his return game and a team poised to be on the biggest stage give Mathieu more Heisman hope than just your regular star defender. Besides, he got to New York last year, so his name recognition is huge.

7. De'Anthony Thomas, RB/WR, Oregon — Chip Kelly is no dummy. Whether he deploys Thomas more as a running back or receiver (plus returner), the sophomore is going to get all the touches he can handle, which means he will provide as many thrills as anyone in the country.

8. Marcus Lattimore, RB, South Carolina — This all spins on the health of his knee coming back from ACL surgery and if he can hold up for 12 punishing regular-season games. If so, his ceiling is as high as any.

9. Aaron Murray, QB, Georgia — The SEC's best quarterback, and the Bulldogs have a sneaky-good feel about them this season. (Hey, that's what we wrote about Murray last year, too!)

10. Tyler Wilson, QB, Arkansas — No, wait. Wilson is the best quarterback in the SEC! We'll see how it all plays out, but his QB rival at Georgia has a better shot at winning his division, which counts for something. SEC quarterbacks have won two of the past five Heismans.

FEBRUARY CHAMPIONS

Rivals.com assigns a point total to each of the school's recruiting classes every year, but a team can't be great based on just one recruiting class. Who's done it the best for five years? Let's add up all those points and see the answer.

OK, big shock: Alabama's Nick Saban. He has two national titles to show for it, and it would be no surprise if more are on the way. But celebrating on Signing Day is only part of the winning equation.

Be careful what you brag about. Nine of the top 15 teams in this recruiting snapshot have had at least one losing season in the past five years (and another, USC, is coming off a two-year postseason ban).

Here are the best recruiting teams of the past five years:

TEAM	POINTS
1. Alabama	13,183
2. USC	12,080
3. Florida	11,827
4. Texas	11,825
5. Florida State	10,986
6. LSU	10,761
7. Ohio State	10,602
8. Oklahoma	10,124
9. Georgia	10,039
10. Auburn	9,564
11. Michigan	9,269
12. Miami	8,612
13. Clemson	8,536
14. UCLA	8,148
15. Tennessee	8,144

(**Editor's note:** *Don't ask what the points mean ... it's too complicated!*)

RULE CHANGES FOR 2012

The change that most affects the game comes on kickoffs, in an effort to decrease what is considered the most dangerous play in football.

The NCAA moved up the spot where toe meets leather from the 30- to the 35-yard line, making it easier for kickers to reach the end zone, thereby increasing touchbacks and reducing the high-speed, injury-causing collisions.

At the same time, returners are encouraged to take a knee in the end zone, since offenses will now begin possession on the

25 instead of the 20.

While some coaches will be content to take the touchback, others might strategize. A high kick near the goal line might often result in a tackle inside the 25. Is it worth the risk? We'll see how coaches play this.

Elsewhere, there is new regulation for blocking below the waist and a banning of leaping over the punt protection shield. One new rule that will be noticed is that a player must miss a snap if he loses his helmet during a play.

STOP THE RUN!

We're not here to tell you that stopping the run is the most important ingredient in having a championship team, because you know that. (Turnover margin is a close second.) But here are some numbers that back it up.

- Two of the past 10 national champs have led the nation in rushing defense.
- Half of the title teams in the past 10 years ranked in the national top three against the run.
- Only one champion — 2005 Texas — ranked worse than 15th nationally against the run, and that Longhorns team had Vince Young to score as many as needed.

National Champions:Rushing Defense

Year	Champion	Rank	YPG
2011	Alabama	1	72.2
2010	Auburn	9	109.1
2009	Alabama	2	78.1
2008	Florida	15	105.4
2007	LSU	12	106.1
2006	Florida	5	72.5
2005	Texas	33	130.9
2004	USC	1	79.4
2003	LSU	3	67.0
2002	Ohio State	3	77.7

What does it mean for this season? If you really like a team against the run, you might want to head to Vegas. We recommend checking out our list of the top 10 defensive lines in the country elsewhere in the magazine.

Illustration by Tim Williams

THE TWEET LIFE

When Arizona athletic director Greg Byrne fired Mike Stoops at midseason, he and his marketing staff set out a strategy to unveil whoever became the next head coach. That plan included top-level secrecy and breaking the news via Twitter.

Welcome to football/life/technology/social media in 2012.

Byrne followed through on the idea, improved upon after a suggestion from his wife, Regina.

"We were flying into the Detroit airport to pick up Coach (Rich) Rodriguez and his family and I asked her, 'What should I put in the tweet?'" Byrne said. "And it was her idea to use a picture."

So Regina snapped a picture of her husband with the Rodriguez family, and Byrne tweeted: "And the new Arizona football coach and his family is....." with a link to a photo. As of late April, that photo had been viewed more than 68,000 times.

It is believed to be the first major coaching hire announced via Twitter, and it surely isn't going to be the last.

Whether it's hirings and firings, recruiting news, injury updates, practice reports, press conference ramblings or in-game reports, fans and media alike are twitcuffed to their smartphones. The fullest experience of being a college football fan is waiting on Twitter — with players, schools, reporters and, *ahem*, the staff of venerable preseason magazines offering an overload of information.

Some of it valuable.

- Twitter was the only place for immediate and unfiltered reaction from Pitt players when Todd Graham bolted for Arizona State after only one season. Several Panthers, feeling burned by the coach's sudden departure, took to their Twitter accounts, including defensive end Brandon Lindsey, who wrote: "For someone who said they read the Bible everyday, he must've missed the pg that said 'thou shall not lie.'"
- Mississippi State painted a Twitter hashtag — #HAILSTATE — in one of its endzones for last year's game against Ole Miss. Michigan and Arkansas followed suit with promotional hashtags on their fields for their spring games.
- As of late April, Matt Barkley — *Lindy's* preseason Offensive Player of the Year — had more than 53,000 followers. That's a start. Our preseason Defensive Player of the Year, Tyrann Mathieu, had close to a staggering 115,000.

Get on board ... or get left behind.

"It's just the reality of the world we're in that news and information is going to break on Twitter, so who's going to be the one to break it?" Byrne said.

The breaking news is nice — for example, Notre Dame announced with a tweet this spring that defensive end Aaron Lynch was transferring — but athletic departments everywhere are wary of TMI — too much information.

Compliance staffs are monitoring athlete's accounts for offensive comments — Michigan pulled its scholarship offer from four-star cornerback Yuri Wright after a series of foul tweets this winter — while educating players and boosters about improper contact with recruits. Notre Dame tight end Tyler Eifert ran afoul of the NCAA rule book when he mentioned a recruit's official campus visit on his Twitter account.

"Getting your arms around it completely is easier said than done," Byrne said. "We set guidelines for our athletes and I tell them, 'Just imagine that whatever you put on your account will end on the ESPN ticker.' That registers with some more than others."

Purdue coach Danny Hope scoffed at the use of Twitter this spring, saying, "To me, tweeting is a lot like keeping a diary. Back in the day, men didn't keep diaries to share our secrets, so I don't get the Twitter thing."

COACHING CHANGES

Given who has returned to the sidelines this fall, 2012 in college football is the Year of the Comeback Coaches.

Six guys who spent time out of the major college game are back for another go in careers that have featured some high peaks.

Urban Meyer and Rich Rodriguez won 10 games multiple times and hope to reprise that success in new locales. The others — Terry Bowden, Mike Leach, Bob Davie and Charlie Weis — also had moments of greatness and are back at it.

Add former NFL head coach Jim Mora Jr., and that's seven noteworthy names to jump all at once right back into the fray.

The coming season also affords some former offensive "gurus" the chance to show that their acumen stretches beyond the coordinator's office. Norm Chow, Paul Chryst, Jim McElwain and Gus Malzahn will undoubtedly find new challenges now that they are responsible for whole football teams.

Fourteen of the 27 jobs that changed hands came in the six BCS automatic-qualifying conferences, including four in the Pacific 12 and three apiece in the Big Ten and SEC.

Of course, the roster of college head coaches lacks the name Joe Paterno for the first time in 47 years. Following his removal at Penn State in the wake of the Jerry Sandusky scandal, Paterno died in January after a short battle with lung cancer.

Also not coaching this fall, for a variety of reasons, are former sideline fixtures Bobby Petrino, Howard Schnellenberger, Pat Hill, Ron Zook, Houston Nutt and Rick Neuheisel.

Akron

Out: Rob Ianello | **In:** Terry Bowden

Bowden ended a 10-year hiatus from coaching in 2009 when he left a broadcasting career to take over at Division II North Alabama. Three playoff appearances later, he earned the surprise hire at Akron, which hasn't had a winning season since 2005 and was 2-22 in Ianello's only two seasons. The Zips have fantastic facilities, and Bowden has a fertile recruiting ground in Northeast Ohio, which has given birth to unwavering optimism with their goofy kangaroo mascot ... and new T-shirts that read, "Fear the Dadgum Roo."

Arizona

Out: Mike Stoops | **In:** Rich Rodriguez

The Wildcats hope the classic "polar opposite" hire can eventually get them to their first Rose Bowl. Out goes Stoops, a defensive specialist with little public presence, and in comes the glad-handing RichRod, with his flashy offense. Rodriguez's defense couldn't stop anyone at Michigan, but this time he convinced his former West Virginia coordinator, Jeff Casteel, to come along for the ride and install his 3-3-5 scheme.

Arizona State

Out: Dennis Erickson | **In:** Todd Graham

After the Sun Devils reportedly put so much of their eggs in Kevin Sumlin's basket, it took them a while to figure out what to do after Sumlin went instead to Texas A&M. Rich Rodriguez's former linebackers coach at West Virginia, Graham had spent 11 months in Pittsburgh, where the Panthers went 6-6. Comically, he was quoted as calling three of his assistants who left for Rodriguez's staff "nothing but mercenaries," and two weeks later left for ASU to go head-up with those guys. He will be leading his fourth team in seven seasons (Rice, Tulsa, Pitt, ASU).

Arkansas

Out: Bobby Petrino | **In:** John L. Smith

Petrino's 21-5 record the past two seasons and the return of quarterback Tyler Wilson and running back Knile Davis, among many others, had Hog fans thinking BCS title. Then he had to go for a Sunday-afternoon motorcycle ride and the whole thing came crashing down in a scandal that harkens to another Arkansan and a previous, uh, personal shortcoming (that one was in the White House).

Arkansas State

Out: Hugh Freeze | **In:** Gus Malzahn

The most head-scratching job change of the offseason belongs to Malzahn, who was making $1.3 million as Auburn's offensive coordinator before taking a half-million-dollar pay cut to take over the Red Wolves, who got to go to the GoDaddy.com Bowl as a reward for a 10-win season last year. Coach Hugh Freeze's reward for his one year at ASU was a rich contract at Ole Miss. If Malzahn had any second thoughts over his decision, they probably multiplied when Bobby Petrino melted down at Arkansas. That could have been Malzahn's job, if only the timing were different.

Colorado State

Out: Steve Fairchild | **In:** Jim McElwain

Colorado State put up $6.5 million and a five-year deal to grab McElwain away from Alabama, where the Tide won two BCS titles in his three years as offensive coordinator. Moving to Fort Collins is a nice move for the Missoula, Mont., native, who played at Eastern Washington, coached at EWU and Montana State, spent a year on Art Shell's staff with the Oakland Raiders, and was the offensive coordinator at Fresno State when Nick Saban called in 2008. He won't have much pressure immediately, given the Rams' 3-9 marks in each of the past three years.

Florida Atlantic

Out: Howard Schnellenberger | **In:** Carl Pelini

Bo Pelini's big brother gets his chance as a head coach. Schnellenberger deserved better than a 1-11 farewell in the final season of a sterling career that saw him recruit Joe Namath to Alabama to play for Bear Bryant, start the Miami dynasty with freshman QB Bernie Kosar, win a national title in 1983 and take Louisville to a Fiesta Bowl. He shepherded FAU into Division I and built the 30,000-seat stadium that Pelini will try to fill.

Fresno State

Out: Pat Hill | **In:** Tim DeRuyter

Hill took Fresno State to the precipice by "playing anybody, anytime, anywhere," but could never quite get the Bulldogs over the top. Still, it was a shock when FSU canned him following 11 bowl games in 15 seasons. DeRuyter, a Californian who

spent the past two years as Texas A&M's defensive coordinator, faces a challenge duplicating Hill's 112-80 record. But bettering Hill's 40-41 mark over his final seven seasons is definitely do-able.

Hawaii

Out: Greg McMackin | **In:** Norm Chow

It took five schools, four decades and three national championships as a college assistant before Chow finally became a head coach. A native Hawaiian, Chow is a natural fit for the Warriors, who have seen declining attendance even though the "retiring" McMackin had led two bowl trips in his four years. Chow's first game will be at the L.A. Coliseum, where he helped Pete Carroll and USC win a pair of national championships.

Houston

Out: Kevin Sumlin | **In:** Tony Levine

If Levine's first season goes anything like his first game, Houston will look savvy for promoting him from assistant head coach to take over when Sumlin left for Texas A&M. The Cougars responded with a 30-14 win over Penn State in the Ticket City Bowl. Now we'll see if Levine, who's been a part of 35 Houston wins in four seasons as an assistant, can win without Case Keenum.

Illinois

Out: Ron Zook | **In:** Tim Beckman

Midway through the 2011 season, Illinois was 6-0 and fireronzook.com was being laughed at. But the original "fireyourcoach website" had the last laugh, as the Illini stumbled through a six-game losing streak and Zook was finally fired. Beckman, meantime, rescued Toledo from the dregs and a point-shaving scandal to go 21-16 in three seasons, with two bowl games. Not the most exciting hire, but the Mid-American Conference to Big Ten highway has been successful for some in the past.

Kansas

Out: Turner Gill | **In:** Charlie Weis

Weis didn't seem to like Kansas very much two years ago when he worked for the Chiefs, but he injected himself into the Jayhawks' search late and came away with the job. He'll try to dig out from a 5-19 mark in Turner Gill's two seasons. Count the people of South Bend skeptical, given Weis' steady decline over a five-year stay at Notre Dame. Gill was hired as head coach at Jerry Falwell's Liberty University.

Memphis

Out: Larry Porter | **In:** Justin Fuente

After coaching with Les Miles at Oklahoma State and LSU, Porter got his first head coaching job ... and went 1-11 and 2-10 before the former Memphis Tigers running back was fired after only two years. So, as Porter becomes running backs coach at Arizona State, there's no high bar for Fuente to scale. He served as Texas Christian's co-offensive coordinator last season. He'll have to get busy quickly in order to have Memphis ready for a move to the Big East next year.

New Mexico

Out: Mike Locksley | **In:** Bob Davie

Locksley struggled through off-field controversy in Albuquerque and never built on the promise he showed either as a recruiter and assistant at Illinois, when the Illini made it to the Rose Bowl. He was fired midseason, and the Lobos had a chance to fully assess Davie as a candidate. They hope he is re-energized after a decade away from the sideline (and mostly in the ESPN broadcast booth) since his firing at Notre Dame, where he had two nine-win seasons in five years, including one BCS bowl. Davie, remember, built his reputation with the "Wrecking Crew" defense at Texas A&M in the 1990s.

North Carolina

Out: Butch Davis/Everett Withers
In: Larry Fedora

Davis got the boot just before the 2011 season, leaving the Tar Heels in a bad spot — but not as bad as forfeiting all of their wins from 2008 and 2009, when Davis used ineligible players. Although not directly

CAREER COACHING VICTORIES

For years we tracked the chase between Florida State's Bobby Bowden and Penn State's Joe Paterno to be the winningest coach in major college football. Paterno got there first, beating Ohio State in 2001 to eclipse Bear Bryant's 323 wins.

JoePa just kept on going for another decade, working the sideline (or the press box) two years after Bowden had retired, reaching a record of 409-136-3 when the Nittany Lions beat Illinois on Oct. 29. That would be his last game, fired amid the scandal involving former Penn State assistant Jerry Sandusky. Paterno, 85, died in January after battling lung cancer.

John Gagliardi, still coaching at Division III power St. John's at the age of 85, holds the all-time coaching mark with a record of 484-133-11 in an astounding 63 seasons. As for the FBS level, nobody is within 150 victories of JoePa.

Virginia Tech's Frank Beamer is the new No. 1 with 251 wins. He and Mack Brown are the current standards for longevity and success at the highest level, each having advanced to bowls in 19 of the past 20 seasons.

Brown is under contract through the 2020 season, when he would be pushing 70. Even if he averages 10 wins in the next nine seasons, he'd still be 92 victories behind Paterno.

Here are the winningest coaches in the FBS (not all these victories came at the major college level, but we're counting them all):

NO.	COACH, CURRENT TEAM	YEARS	AGE	W-L-T	PCT.
1.	Frank Beamer, Virginia Tech	31	65	251-120-4	67.5
2.	Mack Brown, Texas	28	61	227-113-1	66.7
3.	Chris Ault, Nevada	27	65	226-103-1	68.6
4.	Steve Spurrier, South Carolina	22	67	197-75-2	72.3
5.	Dennis Franchione, Texas State	26	61	193-107-2	64.2
6.	Brian Kelly, Notre Dame	21	50	187-67-2	73.4
7.	Mike Price, UTEP	30	66	174-174-0	50.0
8.	Larry Blakeney, Troy	21	64	164-91-1	64.1
9.	Bill Snyder, Kansas State	20	72	159-83-1	65.8
10.	Gary Pinkel, Missouri	21	60	158-91-3	62.5

**Age at start of the season*

implicated in an NCAA agent and academic scandal, there was too much smoke on his clothes to survive. Withers did a solid job as interim coach (7-6), and has since been hired by Urban Meyer as co-defensive coordinator at Ohio State. Fedora arrives from Southern Mississippi, where he went 34-19 in four years, including 12-2 last season.

Ohio State

Out: Luke Fickell | **In:** Urban Meyer

The worst-kept secret in coaching searches ended with Meyer's departure from the ESPN booth for the only job he said could have lured him back to the sideline. He inherits a 6-7 team and his predecessor. Fickell was retained as defensive coordinator at the same salary he made last year as Jim Tressel's interim successor. Meyer, of course, has a 65-12 record with two national championship rings, but he burned out terribly at Florida and reportedly lost control of his team.

Mississippi

Out: Houston Nutt | **In:** Hugh Freeze

The purveyor of the Wild Hog and the Wild Rebel has given way to Michael Oher's high school coach in "The Blind Side." Nutt's decline at Ole Miss (from successive nine-win seasons to 4-8 and 2-10) was remarkably sudden. In the meantime, Freeze's ascent to the job is just as remarkable. He wowed them in his one year at Arkansas State, where he was the lowest-paid coach in major-college football ($200,000).

Penn State

Out: Joe Paterno | **In:** Bill O'Brien

The issue here is how O'Brien will be able to progress with the smoldering anger surrounding Paterno's dismissal. The hiring of O'Brien seemed to be a purposeful turning to the outside, and was not greeted warmly by Nittany Lion Nation. O'Brien comes from the New England Patriots, where he served as offensive coordinator. For what it's worth, he went to Brown ... which means all the Penn State head coaches since 1966 have gone to Brown.

Pittsburgh

Out: Todd Graham | **In:** Paul Chryst

Chryst, the former Wisconsin offensive coordinator, enters through the revolving door, becoming the fourth Pitt coach inside of 13 months. The Panthers have the introductory press conference down. It's the keeping of the coach that needs to improve. Graham bolted after 11 months, following Mike Haywood (15 days on the job before being fired when he was arrested on domestic violence charges), and Dave Wannstedt (six seasons).

Rutgers

Out: Greg Schiano | **In:** Kyle Flood

It seems like Schiano did this just about as well as you can do it. He helped build Rutgers into a reputable, competitive program, did not jump at the first couple of chances to cash in, but after 11 seasons (including 49-28 with five bowls in the past six years), he is taking his chance in the NFL. Rutgers was reportedly close to hiring FIU coach Mario Cristobal, but by promoting Flood, the offensive line coach for seven years, the Scarlet Knights retained most of their recruiting class in the aftermath of Schiano's January departure for Tampa Bay.

Southern Mississippi

Out: Larry Fedora | **In:** Ellis Johnson

Johnson will be able to preach the "never give up" gospel to his players, since he tried for the Southern Miss job in 2008 when Fedora was hired. Johnson comes from South Carolina, where he was assistant head coach and defensive coordinator. Fedora went 33-19 in four seasons.

Texas A&M

Out: Mike Sherman | **In:** Kevin Sumlin

Sumlin and his high-scoring offense gets the challenge of ushering A&M into the SEC. He went 35-17 in four years at Houston and was a hot property on the coaching circuit last year. Arizona State and Illinois flirted with him, but he returned to College Station, where he had been an assistant under RC Slocum in 2001. Sherman, the former Packers coach who enjoyed just one winning season in his four at A&M, is back in the NFL as Dolphins offensive coordinator.

Toledo

Out: Tim Beckman | **In:** Matt Campbell

The Rockets' flashy offense earned this job for Campbell, their coordinator, even though he is just 32. Beckman wanted to take him along to Illinois, but Toledo hopes Campbell was the big reason it averaged more than 42 points a game last season.

Tulane

Out: Bob Toledo | **In:** Curtis Johnson

This seemed like a head-scratching hire until Bounty Gate blew up with the New Orleans Saints, where Johnson coached wide receivers since 2006. Maybe he knew something. Maybe Tulane knows something. Johnson has been only a receivers coach in a 24-year career. He's never been a coordinator, let alone run the show. But Toledo had tons of experience running offenses and being a head coach ... and that didn't work out so well, either.

UAB

Out: Neil Callaway | **In:** Garrick McGee

McGee, who left his position as offensive coordinator at Arkansas, is tackling his first head-coaching job — and he's looking at a steep climb. The Blazers have gone 26-57 in the past seven seasons, and McGee will have to overcome an apathetic fan base.

UCLA

Out: Rick Neuheisel | **In:** Jim Mora Jr.

Neuheisel was snake-bit at the quarterback position for all four of his seasons, miscalculated in switching to the Pistol offense halfway through, and stumbled to a 21-29 record. Mora knows a little about being snake-bit. He was fired by the Atlanta Falcons after kidding on Seattle radio his dream job was in Seattle at the University of Washington, and that he'd leave "even if we were in a playoff run." Then he joined the Seattle Seahawks staff, spent a year as Mike Holmgren's replacement-in-waiting, but after Holmgren "retired" in 2008, Mora lasted only a year before USC's Pete Carroll came available ... and the Seahawks fired Mora to hire Carroll.

Washington State

Out: Paul Wulff | **In:** Mike Leach

The Palouse is a lot of open country — plenty of space for Leach to swing his sword. If he can approach his 10-year record at Texas Tech (84-43, 10 bowl appearances), Washington State will be delirious. The Cougars showed annual progress, but didn't manage a winning season in four years under Wulff and hasn't been above .500 since 2003.

SNEAK PEEK

The best and most productive players in college aren't always the ones most coveted by the NFL, which is why we always ask our pals from NFLDraftScout.com to give us a long-range pro perspective.

From this distance, it appears that the 2013 NFL Draft could be a good one for pocket passers.

USC's Matt Barkley, who was in the top 10 of this list last year as an underclassman, is No. 1. No surprise. But a pair of SEC quarterbacks — Tennessee's Tyler Bray and Arkansas' Tyler Wilson — are also in the top five.

Befitting its status as the nation's best conference, the SEC has 15 of the top 28 draft-eligible prospects, according to NFLDraftScout.com.

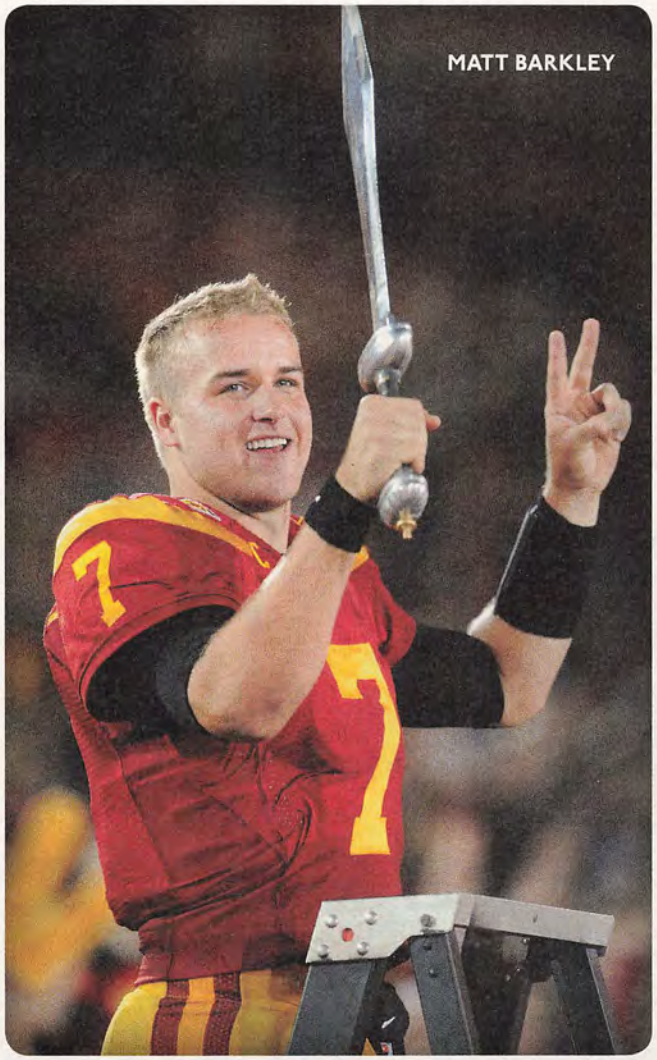
MATT BARKLEY

Photo by Joe Robbins

NO.	PLAYER	POS.	SCHOOL
1.	Matt Barkley	QB	USC
2.	Barkevious Mingo*	DE	LSU
3.	Tyler Bray*	QB	Tennessee
4.	Johnathan Hankins*	DT	Ohio State
5.	Tyler Wilson	QB	Arkansas
6.	Robert Woods*	WR	USC
7.	Marcus Lattimore*	RB	South Carolina
8.	Alex Okafor	DE	Texas
9.	Manti Te'o	LB	Notre Dame
10.	Justin Hunter*	WR	Tennessee
11.	Dominique Easley*	DT	Florida
12.	Bjoern Werner*	DE	Florida State
13.	Jarvis Jones*	OLB	Georgia
14.	Keenan Allen*	WR	California
15.	Corey Lemonier*	DE	Auburn
16.	Tyrann Mathieu*	CB	LSU
17.	Montee Ball	RB	Wisconsin
18.	Brandon Jenkins	DE	Florida State
19.	David Amerson*	CB	NC State
20.	Barrett Jones	OL	Alabama
21.	Kenny Stills*	WR	Oklahoma
22.	Knile Davis	RB	Arkansas
23.	Bennie Logan*	DT	LSU
24.	Johnthan Banks	CB	Mississippi State
25.	Sam Montgomery*	DE	LSU
26.	DeAndre Hopkins*	WR	Clemson
27.	Kevin Reddick	LB	North Carolina
28.	Sean Porter*	LB	Texas A&M
29.	Landry Jones	QB	Oklahoma
30.	William Gholston*	DE	Michigan State
31.	Tyler Eifert*	TE	Notre Dame
32.	Jackson Jeffcoat*	DE	Texas
33.	Chance Warmack*	G	Alabama
34.	John Simon	DL	Ohio State
35.	Kawann Short	DT	Purdue
36.	Joseph Randle*	RB	Oklahoma State
37.	Alex Hurst	OT	LSU
38.	Craig Roh	LB	Michigan
39.	Jonathan Cooper	G	North Carolina
40.	Oday Aboushi	OT	Virginia
41.	Terrance Williams	WR	Baylor
42.	D.J. Fluker*	OT	Alabama
43.	Robert Lester	S	Alabama
44.	Logan Thomas*	QB	Virginia Tech
45.	Tony Jefferson*	S	Oklahoma
46.	Ricky Wagner	OT	Wisconsin
47.	Matt Elam*	S	Florida
48.	Xavier Nixon	OT	Florida
49.	Kwame Geathers*	DT	Georgia
50.	T.J. McDonald	S	USC

*Underclassman

TOP 12 NON-CONFERENCE GAMES

1. MICHIGAN VS. ALABAMA, SEPT. 1 (COWBOYS STADIUM, ARLINGTON, TEXAS)

The up-and-comers from Ann Arbor are looking to climb all the way back against the defending national champs. Can the Wolverines' Denard Robinson be enough of a passing threat? Will the Tide's revamped defensive front roar from the start?

2. NOTRE DAME AT OKLAHOMA, OCT. 27

These college football pillars have met just nine times; just once since 1968. The most recent meeting came in 1999, which was Bob Stoops' first season in Norman. The Irish have had six head coaches since 1999, including George O'Leary, if only for a few minutes.

3. MICHIGAN AT NOTRE DAME, SEPT. 22

This has provided great theater over the years, and last year's was a classic under the lights in the Big House in front of an NCAA-record crowd of 114,804. The Irish, wearing three-leaf clovers on their helmets, scored a TD with 30 seconds left to take the lead, but the Wolverines stunned ND with a long pass and a 16-yard touchdown toss with two seconds left for a 35-31 win.

4. BOISE STATE AT MICHIGAN STATE, AUG. 31

You don't want to mess with the Broncos early, as they have opened the past three seasons by beating Oregon, Virginia Tech and Georgia. All of that, however, was with now-departed quarterback Kellen Moore.

5. FLORIDA AT FLORIDA STATE, NOV. 24

Second-year Gators coach Will Muschamp has to make up ground after losing his debut in the rivalry, 21-7. Florida State has regained the upper hand after losing six in a row, winning the past two meetings and holding Florida to a touchdown each time.

6. SOUTH CAROLINA AT CLEMSON, NOV. 24

The Tigers, especially coach Dabo Swinney, are desperate after losing the past three meetings by a combined 60 points. We're due for a thriller, with a top ACC offense going against a robust SEC defense.

7. NOTRE DAME AT USC, NOV. 24

This is the end of an arduous schedule for the Irish, while the Trojans (presumably runaway champs of the Pac-12 South) will be tuning up for the conference title game and possibly looking for Matt Barkley's Heisman moment. Lane Kiffin and Brian Kelly have split their two meetings.

8. BYU AT UTAH, SEPT. 15

These Holy War rivals went separate ways after the 2010 season — the Utes to the Pac-12 and the Cougars to independence. After extending the heated series for two years, this could be the sad end of the road.

9. AUBURN VS. CLEMSON, SEPT. 1 (ATLANTA)

Clemson hits the field eager to rinse away the taste of the beatdown from West Virginia in the Orange Bowl. Auburn needs to build momentum for the ensuing four-week march that includes games at Mississippi State, vs. LSU and vs. Arkansas.

10. MIAMI VS. NOTRE DAME, OCT. 6 (CHICAGO)

We'd like it better if this was a time-machine game back to the late 1980s, with Lou Holtz and Jimmy Johnson on the sidelines. We'll settle for two programs scratching back for glory at Soldier Field in their first regular-season meeting since '90.

11. WASHINGTON AT LSU, SEPT. 8

Hard to see the Huskies solving LSU's defense, even with quarterback Keith Price, but it's a potentially tricky early test for the Tigers, who open against North Texas.

12. NAVY VS. NOTRE DAME, SEPT. 1 (DUBLIN, IRELAND)

The location is a novelty. The pain Notre Dame feels after losing three of the last five to the Midshipmen is real.

Photo by Rick Osentoski-US PRESSWIRE

MICHIGAN VS. NOTRE DAME

Photo by John David Mercer-US PRESSWIRE

ALABAMA VS. LSU

TOP 12 CONFERENCE GAMES

1. ALABAMA AT LSU, NOV. 3

Will both teams get here undefeated? LSU has previous games at Auburn, Florida and Texas A&M, as well as a home showdown vs. South Carolina. The Tide will have to navigate a neutral-site game vs. Michigan and trips to Arkansas, Missouri, and Tennessee. It could all be a prelude to Game of the Century III.

2. OREGON AT USC, NOV. 3

So, how are you liking Nov. 3 so far? The Trojans shocked the fourth-ranked Ducks last season, ending Oregon's 21-game winning streak in Autzen. Best news: This matchup, flush with playmakers, should be only the first of two, with the rematch coming in the conference title game.

3. MICHIGAN AT OHIO STATE, NOV. 24

This is getting good, again. Michigan is back to being Michigan. Urban is at Ohio State. Denard Robinson. Braxton Miller. The Buckeyes, ineligible for the postseason, can be the ultimate spoiler to "that school up north" as the Wolverines could very well be looking to put a bow on the Legends Division. Michigan, which snapped a seven-game series skid last season, hasn't partied in Columbus since 2000.

4. GEORGIA AT MISSOURI; FLORIDA AT TEXAS A&M, SEPT. 8

The SEC set up its newbies with attractive home games to start the conference season. How accommodating. And then watch the SEC eat its young ... if it can.

5. MICHIGAN STATE AT WISCONSIN, OCT. 27

These teams played two great ones last season, the Spartans winning on a Hail Mary in the regular season and the Badgers one-upping MSU with a come-from-behind 42-39 win in the Big Ten Championship Game. This is the middle of a brutal stretch for Sparty — after a game at Michigan and before a game vs. Nebraska.

6. LSU AT ARKANSAS, NOV. 24

Last day of the regular season. SEC West title at stake?

7. OKLAHOMA VS. TEXAS, OCT. 13 (DALLAS)

A rivalry that stays in the Big 12. Hooray for tradition.

8. OKLAHOMA AT WEST VIRGINIA, NOV. 17

A new non-traditional rivalry that could become one of the best in the Big 12. Hooray for change.

9. GEORGIA AT SOUTH CAROLINA, OCT. 6

The heaviest hitters from the SEC Eastern Division will try to land a few haymakers, while Steve Spurrier fires barbs from outside the ring.

10. ALABAMA AT ARKANSAS, SEPT. 15

After opening against Jacksonville State and Louisiana-Monroe, the Bobby Petrino-less Hogs will see if they still have a chance to be special.

11. MICHIGAN STATE AT MICHIGAN, OCT. 20

Brady Hoke solved Ohio State last season. To be a Legends leader, he has to get his Wolverines to end a four-game skid against State.

12. CLEMSON AT FLORIDA STATE, SEPT. 22

The frontrunner for the ACC Atlantic Division emerges after this game. Mark Stoops' FSU defense is still smarting after giving up 455 yards to the Tigers in a 35-30 loss last season.

COMEBACK PLAYERS

Injuries are part of the game, and so is coming back from them. Here is a look at 10 players who missed all, or a significant part, of last season, including some high-profile running backs:

Knile Davis, RB, Arkansas (broken ankle)
He didn't have any contact in the spring but is expected to have the burst and the cuts that led to an All-SEC sophomore season in which he ran for 1,322 yards and 13 touchdowns. Missed all of last season.

Ray Graham, RB, Pittsburgh (knee)
With 939 yards through six games last year, Graham was on pace for a 2,000-yard season. He is hoping to be 100 percent by fall camp for new coach Paul Chryst.

Montel Harris, RB, Boston College (knee)
He's BC's career rushing leader (3,735 yards) and was granted an extra year of eligibility after playing in only two games last year. Sad news, though: His 2012 season was in doubt after re-injuring the knee at the start of spring.

Justin Hunter, WR, Tennessee (knee)
The tall, speedy sophomore has averaged 22.4 yards a catch in a little more than a season. He blew out his knee in the third game last year when he was leading the SEC in receptions.

Marcus Lattimore, RB, South Carolina (knee)
Was still recovering this spring from a torn ACL suffered in October, when he was leading the SEC in rushing. The outlook was positive for the junior, who can't be stopped even by SEC defenses; he has four games of at least 176 yards vs. the SEC.

Brandon Magee, LB, Arizona State (Achilles' tendon)
The former ASU coaching staff was saying last year that Magee was the team's best linebacker (at least the one with his head on the straightest) before the injury in fall camp. Magee, who made 73 tackles as a junior in 2010, should have no trouble replacing the modest production and lack of leadership from departed would-be superstar Vontaze Burfict.

Kenny Tate, LB, Maryland (knee)
The former All-ACC safety moved to linebacker before last season, which seemed like a curious move, but he's staying there as the Terps put in a 3-4 scheme this spring under new coordinator Brian Stewart. If the defense is as aggressive as promised, Tate should be one of the nation's top defensive playmakers.

Jeff Tuel, QB, Washington St. (collar bone)
Tuel, limited to three games last season because of a variety of ailments, was sensational in the spring game. He could face competition when sophomore Connor Halliday returns in the fall from a liver injury, but Tuel is the one most likely to benefit from Mike Leach's offense.

Nathan Williams, DE, Ohio State (knee)
Projected to be the Buckeyes' top defender last season as a senior, he had to shut it down after one game, eventually needing microfracture surgery. He was still healing as he sat out spring drills, but Ohio State is hopeful that Williams (21.5 career tackles for loss) can team with John Simon and others to create a formidable front line in the fall.

Arizona's ACL army
Here's a special, uh, honor for first-year coach Rich Rodriguez and the Wildcats, who have five players coming back from ACL tears. Ouch, make that four, because safety Adam Hall, the team's hardest hitter and a projected leader, is out again after ripping up the same knee in the spring game. Linebacker Jake Fischer looked great in the spring, though, and defensive tackle Willie Mobley and running back Greg Nwoko were also back for spring ball. Jonathan McKnight, the team's best cornerback, was on pace for a fall camp return.

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Sincerely,
Lindy Davis
Publisher

Lindy's SPORTS ANNUALS

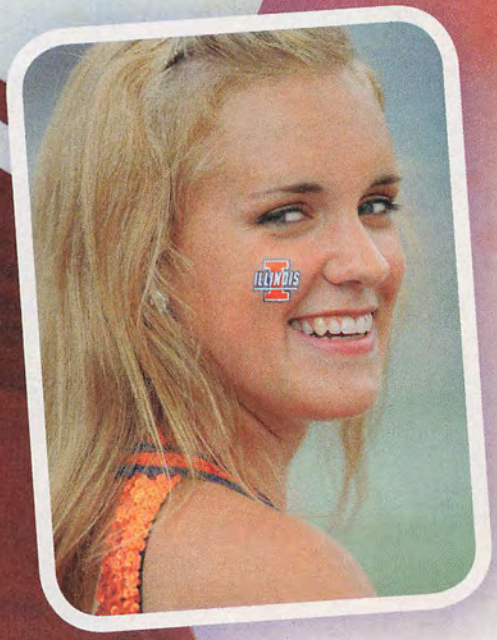
Sidelines 2012

1

1. The Great Outdoors
Sarah, a senior Marketing major from Huntsville, Ala., enjoys anything outdoors … fishing, cooking out, being on the lake, hunting with her dad, and of course, cheering on the sideline at Bryant-Denny Stadium.

2. Clear as a Crystal
Emily is an Elementary Education major from Crystal Lakes, Ill. who dances with the Illinettes Dance Team. Reading and traveling are among her favorites. It's crystal clear why Illini fans are glad she came their way.

2



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4
5
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SOUTHE
MISS

3. Here Comes the Sun

Eva is from Louisville, a sophomore Biology major who enjoys playing softball. Pulling hard for the Miami Hurricanes, she's a member of their dance team, the Sunsations … sensational!

4. Home Sweet Home

Sara, a senior Elementary Education major, has been marching with the Auburn band for four years. A native of Auburn, Ala., and a big Tiger fan, when it came time for college, why look anywhere else?

5. The Eagles Have Landed

A first-year college student, Summer landed in Hattiesburg to major in Healthcare Marketing. Her interests are varied — deep sea fishing, mountain bike riding, photography, tennis … and cheering for the Eagles of Southern Miss.

6. Taytum of Tallahassee

A sophomore from Baker County, Fla., Taytum loves cheerleading, boating and skeet shooting. She's an Exercise Science major … appropriate since she gets so much exercise cheering for the Seminoles.

7. Dancing for a Tiger Title

With her LSU team favored for the national title, Ragen can enjoy dancing with the Golden Band from Tigerland even more. She's an Industrial Engineering major from Franklinton, La., and has five younger siblings.

8. All Smiles

Taylor, a sophomore from Cabot, Ark., has a lot to smile about … spending time with family, and cheering for her beloved Razorbacks, who are national title contenders. Her major — Health Sciences (Dental Hygiene), of course.

9. Go West Young Man
Amanda is certainly not a man, but she did go west. A Biology major from Alabama, she passed on her home state schools to be a student in Oxford, Miss., where she is a cheerleader for Ole Miss.

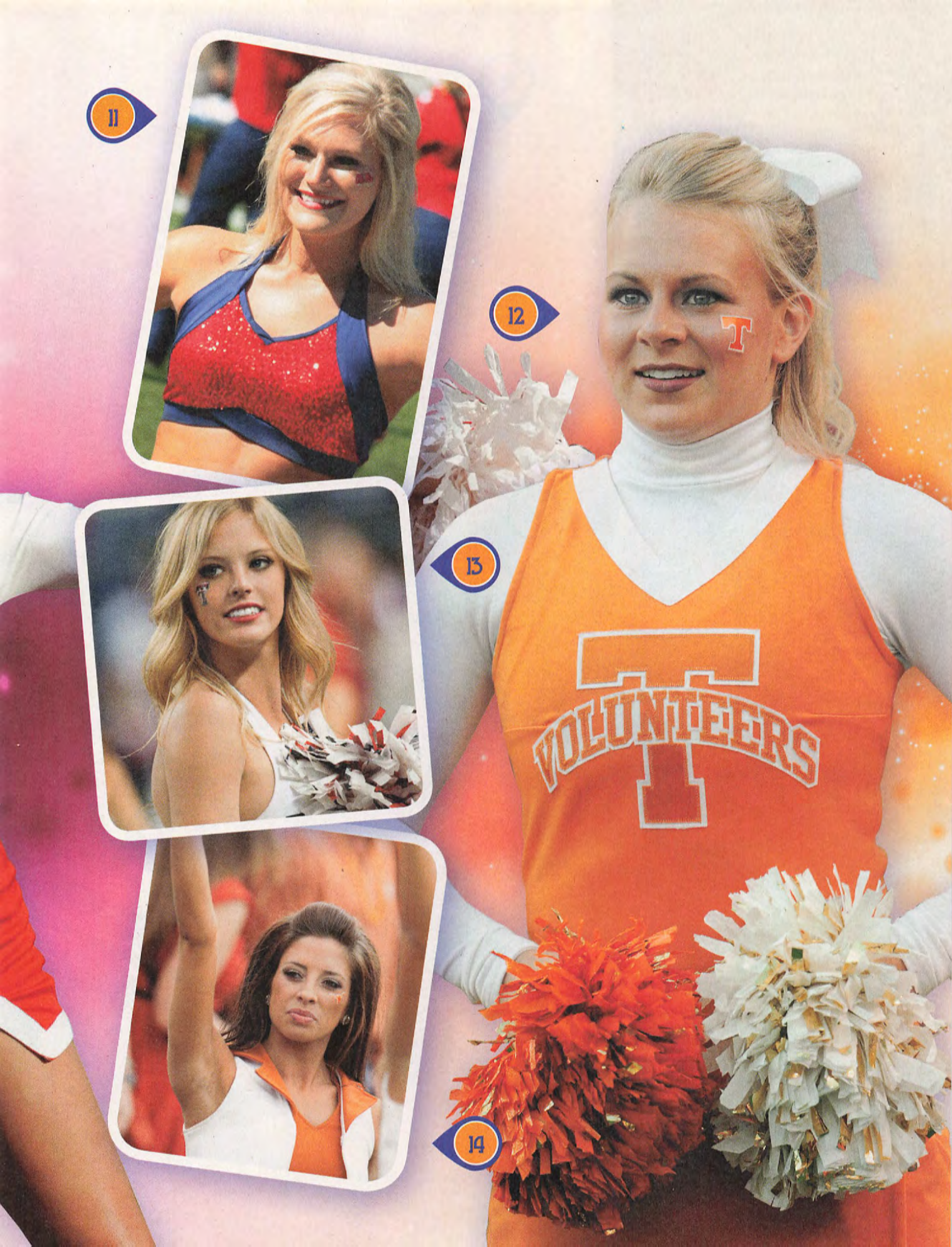
10. Laying Down the Law
The ruling is clear for Kara, a senior Psychology major from Grand Island, Neb. The 'Huskers have the "most respectful and loyal fans in the nation." The cheering squad captain, she plans to attend law school.

11. Student of the Game
Caroline isn't just a Rebelette, cheering for Ole Miss. She understands football, its plays and its strategy. Too bad the team from Oxford doesn't play Oregon this season. One of her favorite things is duck hunting.

12. Really a Volunteer
Brittany is a junior co-captain of the Tennessee cheering squad, but she also finds time to do much more. She's on the FCA Leadership Team and serves as student member of the UT Athletic Board.

13. You Can 'Bank' On It
No doubt about where Abby stands … it's on the sideline in Lubbock, cheering for her Texas Tech Red Raiders. She'll have a minor in American Sign Language and loves playing with her dog … named "Banks."

14. Serious Business
Even though she's from Red Raider country in Lubbock, Brogan pulls for a different Texas team. She's a senior Business major, cheering for the Longhorns to bounce back this season … and that *is* serious business in Austin.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12
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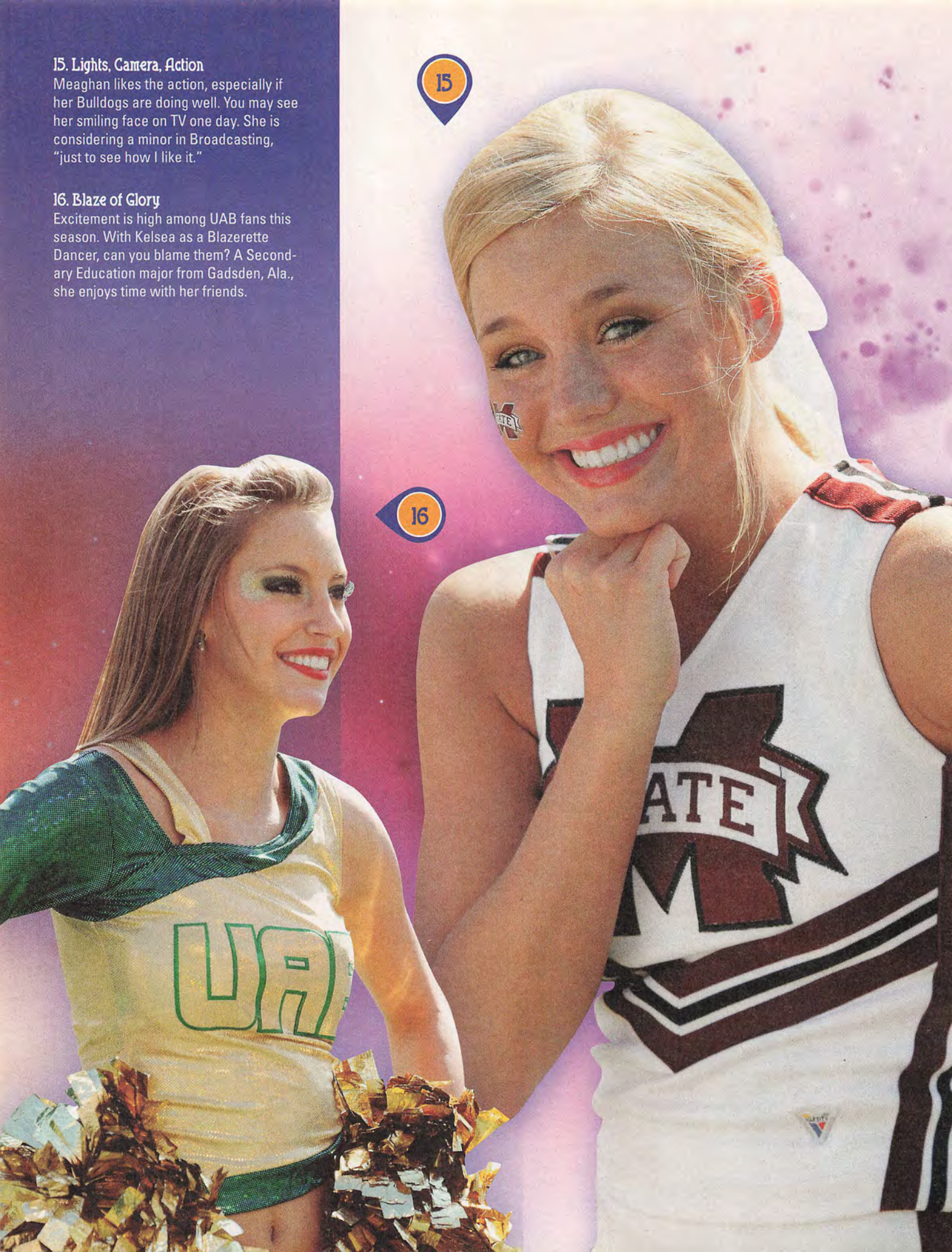
14
VOLUNTEERS

15. Lights, Camera, Action
Meaghan likes the action, especially if her Bulldogs are doing well. You may see her smiling face on TV one day. She is considering a minor in Broadcasting, "just to see how I like it."

16. Blaze of Glory
Excitement is high among UAB fans this season. With Kelsea as a Blazerette Dancer, can you blame them? A Secondary Education major from Gadsden, Ala., she enjoys time with her friends.



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Wrangler

NATIONAL SCHEDULES

ACC

BOSTON COLLEGE
Sept. 1 MIAMI
Sept. 8 MAINE
Sept. 15 at Northwestern
Sept. 29 CLEMSON
Oct. 6 at Army
Oct. 13 at Florida State
Oct. 20 at Georgia Tech
Oct. 27 MARYLAND
Nov. 3 at Wake Forest
Nov. 10 NOTRE DAME
Nov. 17 VIRGINIA TECH
Nov. 24 at NC State

CLEMSON
Sept. 1 vs. Auburn (Atlanta, GA)
Sept. 8 BALL STATE
Sept. 15 FURMAN
Sept. 22 at Florida State
Sept. 29 at Boston College
Oct. 6 GEORGIA TECH
Oct. 20 VIRGINIA TECH
Oct. 25 at Wake Forest
Nov. 3 at Duke
Nov. 10 MARYLAND
Nov. 17 NC STATE
Nov. 24 SOUTH CAROLINA

DUKE
Sept. 1 FIU
Sept. 8 at Stanford
Sept. 15 N.C. CENTRAL
Sept. 22 MEMPHIS
Sept. 29 at Wake Forest
Oct. 6 VIRGINIA
Oct. 13 at Virginia Tech
Oct. 20 NORTH CAROLINA
Oct. 27 at Florida State
Nov. 3 CLEMSON
Nov. 17 at Georgia Tech
Nov. 24 MIAMI

FLORIDA STATE
Sept. 1 MURRAY STATE
Sept. 8 SAVANNAH STATE
Sept. 15 WAKE FOREST
Sept. 22 CLEMSON
Sept. 29 at South Florida
Oct. 6 at NC State
Oct. 13 BOSTON COLLEGE
Oct. 20 at Miami
Oct. 27 DUKE
Nov. 8 at Virginia Tech
Nov. 17 at Maryland
Nov. 24 FLORIDA

GEORGIA TECH
Sept. 3 at Virginia Tech
Sept. 8 PRESBYTERIAN
Sept. 15 VIRGINIA
Sept. 22 MIAMI
Sept. 29 MIDDLE TENNESSEE
Oct. 6 at Clemson
Oct. 20 BOSTON COLLEGE
Oct. 27 BYU
Nov. 3 at Maryland
Nov. 10 at North Carolina
Nov. 17 DUKE
Nov. 24 at Georgia

MARYLAND
Sept. 1 WILLIAM & MARY
Sept. 8 at Temple
Sept. 15 CONNECTICUT
Sept. 22 at West Virginia
Oct. 6 WAKE FOREST
Oct. 13 at Virginia
Oct. 20 NC STATE
Oct. 27 at Boston College
Nov. 3 GEORGIA TECH
Nov. 10 at Clemson
Nov. 17 FLORIDA STATE
Nov. 24 at North Carolina

MIAMI
Sept. 1 at Boston College
Sept. 8 at Kansas State
Sept. 15 BETHUNE-COOKMAN
Sept. 22 at Georgia Tech
Sept. 29 NC STATE
Oct. 6 vs. Notre Dame (Chicago)
Oct. 13 NORTH CAROLINA
Oct. 20 FLORIDA STATE
Nov. 1 VIRGINIA TECH
Nov. 10 at Virginia
Nov. 17 SOUTH FLORIDA
Nov. 24 at Duke

NORTH CAROLINA
Sept. 1 ELON
Sept. 8 at Wake Forest
Sept. 15 at Louisville
Sept. 22 EAST CAROLINA
Sept. 29 IDAHO
Oct. 6 VIRGINIA TECH
Oct. 13 at Miami
Oct. 20 at Duke
Oct. 27 NC STATE
Nov. 10 GEORGIA TECH
Nov. 15 at Virginia
Nov. 24 MARYLAND

NC STATE
Aug. 31 vs. Tennessee (Atlanta)
Sept. 8 at Connecticut
Sept. 15 SOUTH ALABAMA
Sept. 22 THE CITADEL
Sept. 29 at Miami
Oct. 6 FLORIDA STATE
Oct. 20 at Maryland
Oct. 27 at North Carolina
Nov. 3 VIRGINIA
Nov. 10 WAKE FOREST
Nov. 17 at Clemson
Nov. 24 BOSTON COLLEGE

VIRGINIA
Sept. 1 RICHMOND
Sept. 8 PENN STATE
Sept. 15 at Georgia Tech
Sept. 22 at TCU
Sept. 29 LOUISIANA TECH
Oct. 6 at Duke
Oct. 13 MARYLAND
Oct. 20 WAKE FOREST
Nov. 3 at NC State
Nov. 10 MIAMI
Nov. 15 NORTH CAROLINA
Nov. 24 at Virginia Tech

VIRGINIA TECH
Sept. 3 GEORGIA TECH
Sept. 8 AUSTIN PEAY
Sept. 15 at Pittsburgh
Sept. 22 BOWLING GREEN
Sept. 29 vs. Cincinnati (Landover, MD)
Oct. 6 at North Carolina
Oct. 13 DUKE
Oct. 20 at Clemson
Nov. 1 at Miami
Nov. 8 FLORIDA STATE
Nov. 17 at Boston College
Nov. 24 VIRGINIA

WAKE FOREST
Sept. 1 LIBERTY
Sept. 8 NORTH CAROLINA
Sept. 15 at Florida State
Sept. 22 ARMY
Sept. 29 DUKE
Oct. 6 at Maryland
Oct. 20 at Virginia
Oct. 25 CLEMSON
Nov. 3 BOSTON COLLEGE
Nov. 10 at NC State
Nov. 17 at Notre Dame
Nov. 24 VANDERBILT

BIG EAST

CINCINNATI
Sept. 6 PITTSBURGH
Sept. 15 DELAWARE STATE
Sept. 29 vs. Virginia Tech (Landover, MD)
Oct. 6 MIAMI (OH)
Oct. 13 FORDHAM
Oct. 20 at Toledo
Oct. 26 at Louisville
Nov. 3 SYRACUSE
Nov. 10 at Temple
Nov. 17 RUTGERS
Nov. 23 SOUTH FLORIDA
Dec. 1 at Connecticut

CONNECTICUT
Aug. 30 MASSACHUSETTS
Sept. 8 NC STATE
Sept. 15 at Maryland
Sept. 22 at Western Michigan
Sept. 29 BUFFALO
Oct. 6 at Rutgers
Oct. 13 TEMPLE
Oct. 19 at Syracuse
Nov. 3 at South Florida
Nov. 9 PITTSBURGH
Nov. 24 at Louisville
Dec. 1 CINCINNATI

LOUISVILLE
Sept. 2 KENTUCKY
Sept. 8 MISSOURI STATE
Sept. 15 NORTH CAROLINA
Sept. 22 at FIU
Sept. 29 at Southern Miss
Oct. 13 at Pittsburgh
Oct. 20 SOUTH FLORIDA
Oct. 26 CINCINNATI
Nov. 3 TEMPLE
Nov. 10 at Syracuse
Nov. 24 CONNECTICUT
Nov. 29 at Rutgers

PITTSBURGH
Sept. 1 YOUNGSTOWN STATE
Sept. 6 at Cincinnati
Sept. 15 VIRGINIA TECH
Sept. 22 at Gardner-Webb
Oct. 5 at Syracuse
Oct. 13 LOUISVILLE
Oct. 20 at Buffalo
Oct. 27 TEMPLE
Nov. 3 at Notre Dame
Nov. 9 at Connecticut
Nov. 24 RUTGERS
Dec. 1 at South Florida

RUTGERS
Sept. 1 at Tulane
Sept. 8 HOWARD
Sept. 13 at South Florida
Sept. 22 at Arkansas
Oct. 6 CONNECTICUT
Oct. 13 SYRACUSE
Oct. 20 at Temple
Oct. 27 KENT STATE
Nov. 10 ARMY
Nov. 17 at Cincinnati
Nov. 24 at Pittsburgh
Nov. 29 LOUISVILLE

SYRACUSE
Sept. 1 NORTHWESTERN
Sept. 8 vs. USC (East Rutherford, N.J.)
Sept. 15 STONY BROOK
Sept. 22 at Minnesota
Oct. 5 PITTSBURGH
Oct. 13 at Rutgers
Oct. 19 CONNECTICUT
Oct. 27 at South Florida
Nov. 3 at Cincinnati
Nov. 10 LOUISVILLE
Nov. 17 at Missouri
Nov. 23 at Temple

TEMPLE
Aug. 31 VILLANOVA
Sept. 8 MARYLAND
Sept. 22 at Penn State
Oct. 6 SOUTH FLORIDA
Oct. 13 at Connecticut
Oct. 20 RUTGERS
Oct. 27 at Pittsburgh
Nov. 3 at Louisville
Nov. 10 CINCINNATI
Nov. 17 at Army
Nov. 23 SYRACUSE

SOUTH FLORIDA
Sept. 1 CHATTANOOGA
Sept. 8 at Nevada
Sept. 13 RUTGERS
Sept. 22 at Ball State
Sept. 29 FLORIDA STATE
Oct. 6 at Temple
Oct. 20 at Louisville
Oct. 27 SYRACUSE
Nov. 3 CONNECTICUT
Nov. 17 at Miami
Nov. 23 at Cincinnati
Dec. 1 PITTSBURGH

BIG TEN

ILLINOIS
Sept. 1 WESTERN MICHIGAN
Sept. 8 at Arizona State
Sept. 15 CHARLESTON SOUTHERN
Sept. 22 LOUISIANA TECH
Sept. 29 PENN STATE
Oct. 6 at Wisconsin
Oct. 13 at Michigan
Oct. 27 INDIANA
Nov. 3 at Ohio State
Nov. 10 MINNESOTA
Nov. 17 PURDUE
Nov. 24 at Northwestern

INDIANA
Sept. 1 INDIANA STATE
Sept. 8 vs. Massachusetts (Boston)
Sept. 15 BALL STATE
Sept. 29 at Northwestern
Oct. 6 MICHIGAN STATE
Oct. 13 OHIO STATE
Oct. 20 at Navy
Oct. 27 at Illinois
Nov. 3 IOWA
Nov. 10 WISCONSIN
Nov. 17 at Penn State
Nov. 24 at Purdue

IOWA
Sept. 1 vs. Northern Illinois (Chicago)
Sept. 8 IOWA STATE
Sept. 15 NORTHERN IOWA
Sept. 22 CENTRAL MICHIGAN
Sept. 29 MINNESOTA
Oct. 13 at Michigan State
Oct. 20 PENN STATE
Oct. 27 at Northwestern
Nov. 3 at Indiana
Nov. 10 PURDUE
Nov. 17 at Michigan
Nov. 23 NEBRASKA

MICHIGAN
Sep. 1 vs. Alabama (Arlington, TX)
Sep. 8 AIR FORCE
Sep. 15 MASSACHUSETTS
Sep. 22 at Notre Dame
Oct. 6 at Purdue
Oct. 13 ILLINOIS
Oct. 20 MICHIGAN STATE
Oct. 27 at Nebraska
Nov. 3 at Minnesota
Nov. 10 NORTHWESTERN
Nov. 17 IOWA
Nov. 24 at Ohio State

MICHIGAN STATE
Aug. 31 BOISE STATE
Sept. 8 at Central Michigan
Sept. 15 NOTRE DAME
Sept. 22 EASTERN MICHIGAN
Sept. 29 OHIO STATE
Oct. 6 at Indiana
Oct. 13 IOWA
Oct. 20 at Michigan
Oct. 27 at Wisconsin
Nov. 3 NEBRASKA
Nov. 17 NORTHWESTERN
Nov. 24 at Minnesota

MINNESOTA
Aug. 30 at UNLV
Sept. 8 NEW HAMPSHIRE
Sept. 15 WESTERN MICHIGAN
Sept. 22 SYRACUSE
Sept. 29 at Iowa
Oct. 13 NORTHWESTERN
Oct. 20 at Wisconsin
Oct. 27 PURDUE
Nov. 3 MICHIGAN
Nov. 10 at Illinois
Nov. 17 at Nebraska
Nov. 24 MICHIGAN STATE

NEBRASKA
Sept. 1 SOUTHERN MISS
Sept. 8 at UCLA
Sept. 15 ARKANSAS STATE
Sept. 22 IDAHO STATE
Sept. 29 WISCONSIN
Oct 6 at Ohio State
Oct 20 at Northwestern
Oct 27 MICHIGAN
Nov 3 at Michigan State
Nov 10 PENN STATE
Nov 17 MINNESOTA
Nov 23 at Iowa

NORTHWESTERN
Sept. 1 at Syracuse
Sept. 8 VANDERBILT
Sept. 15 BOSTON COLLEGE
Sept. 22 SOUTH DAKOTA
Sept. 29 INDIANA
Oct. 6 at Penn State
Oct. 13 at Minnesota
Oct. 20 NEBRASKA
Oct. 27 IOWA
Nov. 10 at Michigan
Nov. 17 at Michigan State
Nov. 24 ILLINOIS

OHIO STATE
Sept. 1 MIAMI (OH)
Sept. 8 UCF
Sept. 15 CALIFORNIA
Sept. 22 UAB
Sept. 29 at Michigan State
Oct 6 NEBRASKA
Oct 13 at Indiana
Oct 20 PURDUE
Oct 27 at Penn State
Nov 3 ILLINOIS
Nov 17 at Wisconsin
Nov 24 MICHIGAN

PENN STATE
Sept. 1 OHIO
Sept. 8 at Virginia
Sept. 15 NAVY
Sept. 22 TEMPLE
Sept. 29 at Illinois
Oct. 6 NORTHWESTERN
Oct. 20 at Iowa
Oct. 27 OHIO STATE
Nov. 3 at Purdue
Nov. 10 at Nebraska
Nov. 17 INDIANA
Nov. 24 WISCONSIN

PURDUE
Sept. 1 EASTERN KENTUCKY
Sept. 8 at Notre Dame
Sept. 15 EASTERN MICHIGAN
Sept. 29 MARSHALL
Oct. 6 MICHIGAN
Oct. 13 WISCONSIN
Oct. 20 at Ohio State
Oct. 27 at Minnesota
Nov. 3 PENN STATE
Nov. 10 at Iowa
Nov. 17 at Illinois
Nov. 24 INDIANA

WISCONSIN
Sept. 1 NORTHERN IOWA
Sept. 8 at Oregon State
Sept. 15 UTAH STATE
Sept. 22 UTEP
Sept. 29 at Nebraska
Oct. 6 ILLINOIS
Oct. 13 at Purdue
Oct. 20 MINNESOTA
Oct. 27 MICHIGAN STATE
Nov. 10 at Indiana
Nov. 17 OHIO STATE
Nov. 24 at Penn State

BIG 12

BAYLOR
Sept. 1 SMU
Sept. 15 SAM HOUSTON STATE
Sept. 22 at ULM
Sept. 29 at West Virginia
Oct. 13 TCU
Oct. 20 at Texas
Oct. 27 at Iowa State
Nov. 3 KANSAS
Nov. 10 at Oklahoma
Nov. 17 KANSAS STATE
Nov. 24 vs. Texas Tech (Arlington, TX)
Dec. 1 OKLAHOMA STATE

IOWA STATE
Sept. 1 TULSA
Sept. 8 at Iowa
Sept. 15 WESTERN ILLINOIS
Sept. 29 TEXAS TECH
Oct 6 at TCU
Oct 13 KANSAS STATE
Oct 20 at Oklahoma State
Oct 27 BAYLOR
Nov 3 OKLAHOMA
Nov 10 at Texas
Nov 17 at Kansas
Nov 24 WEST VIRGINIA

KANSAS
Sept. 1 SOUTH DAKOTA STATE
Sept. 8 RICE
Sept. 15 TCU
Sept. 22 at Northern Illinois
Oct. 6 at Kansas State
Oct. 13 OKLAHOMA STATE
Oct. 20 at Oklahoma
Oct. 27 TEXAS
Nov. 3 at Baylor
Nov. 10 at Texas Tech
Nov. 17 IOWA STATE
Dec. 1 at West Virginia

KANSAS STATE
Sept. 1 MISSOURI STATE
Sept. 8 MIAMI
Sept. 15 NORTH TEXAS
Sept. 22 at Oklahoma
Oct. 6 KANSAS
Oct. 13 at Iowa State
Oct. 20 at West Virginia
Oct. 27 TEXAS TECH
Nov. 3 OKLAHOMA STATE
Nov. 10 at TCU
Nov. 17 at Baylor
Dec. 1 TEXAS

OKLAHOMA
Sept. 1 at UTEP
Sept. 8 FLORIDA A&M
Sept. 22 KANSAS STATE
Oct. 6 at Texas Tech
Oct. 13 vs. Texas (Dallas)
Oct. 20 KANSAS
Oct. 27 NOTRE DAME
Nov. 3 at Iowa State
Nov. 10 BAYLOR
Nov. 17 at West Virginia
Nov. 24 OKLAHOMA STATE
Dec. 1 at TCU

OKLAHOMA STATE
Sept. 1 SAVANNAH STATE
Sept. 8 at Arizona
Sept. 15 LOUISIANA
Sept. 29 TEXAS
Oct. 13 at Kansas
Oct. 20 IOWA STATE
Oct. 27 TCU
Nov. 3 at Kansas State
Nov. 10 WEST VIRGINIA
Nov. 17 TEXAS TECH
Nov. 24 at Oklahoma
Dec. 1 at Baylor

TCU
Sept. 8 GRAMBLING STATE
Sept. 15 at Kansas
Sept. 22 VIRGINIA
Sept. 29 at SMU
Oct. 6 IOWA STATE
Oct. 13 at Baylor
Oct. 20 TEXAS TECH
Oct. 27 at Oklahoma State
Nov. 3 at West Virginia
Nov. 10 KANSAS STATE
Nov. 24 at Texas
Dec. 1 OKLAHOMA

TEXAS
Sept. 1 WYOMING
Sept. 8 NEW MEXICO
Sept. 15 at Ole Miss
Sept. 29 at Oklahoma State
Oct. 6 WEST VIRGINIA
Oct. 13 vs. Oklahoma (Dallas)
Oct. 20 BAYLOR
Oct. 27 at Kansas
Nov. 3 at Texas Tech
Nov. 10 IOWA STATE
Nov. 24 TCU
Dec. 1 at Kansas State

Wrangler

NATIONAL SCHEDULES

TEXAS TECH
Sept. 1 NORTHWESTERN STATE
Sept. 8 at Texas State
Sept. 15 NEW MEXICO
Sept. 29 at Iowa State
Oct. 6 OKLAHOMA
Oct. 13 WEST VIRGINIA
Oct. 20 at TCU
Oct. 27 at Kansas State
Nov. 3 TEXAS
Nov. 10 KANSAS
Nov. 17 at Oklahoma State
Nov. 24 vs. Baylor (Arlington, TX)

WEST VIRGINIA
Sept. 1 MARSHALL
Sept. 15 James Madison
Sept. 22 MARYLAND
Sept. 29 BAYLOR
Oct. 6 at Texas
Oct. 13 at Texas Tech
Oct. 20 KANSAS STATE
Nov. 3 TCU
Nov. 10 at Oklahoma State
Nov. 17 OKLAHOMA
Nov. 24 at Iowa State
Dec. 1 KANSAS

C-USA

EAST CAROLINA
Sept. 1 APPALACHIAN STATE
Sept. 8 at South Carolina
Sept. 15 at Southern Miss
Sept. 22 at North Carolina
Sept. 29 UTEP
Oct. 6 at UCF
Oct. 13 MEMPHIS
Oct. 20 at UAB
Oct. 27 NAVY
Nov. 3 HOUSTON
Nov. 17 at Tulane
Nov. 24 MARSHALL

HOUSTON
Sept. 1 TEXAS STATE
Sept. 8 LOUISIANA TECH
Sept. 15 at UCLA
Sept. 29 vs. Rice (Reliant Stadium)
Oct. 6 NORTH TEXAS
Oct. 13 UAB
Oct. 20 at SMU
Oct. 27 UTEP
Nov. 3 at East Carolina
Nov. 10 TULSA
Nov. 17 at Marshall
Nov. 24 TULANE

MARSHALL
Sept. 1 at West Virginia
Sept. 8 WESTERN CAROLINA
Sept. 15 OHIO
Sept. 22 at Rice
Sept. 29 at Purdue
Oct. 6 TULSA
Oct. 20 at Southern Miss
Oct. 27 UCF
Nov. 3 MEMPHIS
Nov. 10 at UAB
Nov. 17 HOUSTON
Nov. 24 at East Carolina

MEMPHIS
Sept. 1 TENNESSEE-MARTIN
Sept. 8 at Arkansas State
Sept. 15 MIDDLE TENNESSEE
Sept. 22 at Duke
Oct. 6 RICE
Oct. 13 at East Carolina
Oct. 20 UCF
Oct. 27 at SMU
Nov. 3 at Marshall
Nov. 10 TULANE
Nov. 17 at UAB
Nov. 24 SOUTHERN MISS

RICE
Sept. 1 UCLA
Sept. 8 at Kansas
Sept. 15 at Louisiana Tech
Sept. 22 MARSHALL
Sept. 29 vs. Houston (Reliant Stadium)
Oct. 6 at Memphis
Oct. 13 UTSA
Oct. 20 at Tulsa
Oct. 27 SOUTHERN MISS
Nov. 3 at Tulane
Nov. 17 SMU
Nov. 24 at UTEP

SMU
Sept. 1 at Baylor
Sept. 8 STEPHEN F. AUSTIN
Sept. 15 TEXAS A&M
Sept. 29 TCU
Oct. 6 at UTEP
Oct. 13 at Tulane
Oct. 20 HOUSTON
Oct. 27 MEMPHIS
Nov. 3 at UCF
Nov. 10 SOUTHERN MISS
Nov. 17 at Rice
Nov. 24 TULSA

SOUTHERN MISS
Sept. 1 at Nebraska
Sept. 15 EAST CAROLINA
Sept. 22 at Western Kentucky
Sept. 29 LOUISVILLE
Oct. 6 BOISE STATE
Oct. 13 at UCF
Oct. 20 MARSHALL
Oct. 27 at Rice
Nov. 3 UAB
Nov. 10 at SMU
Nov. 17 UTEP
Nov. 24 at Memphis

TULANE
Sept. 1 RUTGERS
Sept. 8 at Tulsa
Sept. 22 OLE MISS
Sept. 29 ULM
Oct. 6 at Louisiana
Oct. 13 SMU
Oct. 20 at UTEP
Oct. 27 UAB
Nov. 3 RICE
Nov. 10 at Memphis
Nov. 17 EAST CAROLINA
Nov. 24 at Houston

TULSA
Sept. 1 at Iowa State
Sept. 8 TULANE
Sept. 15 NICHOLLS STATE
Sept. 22 FRESNO STATE
Sept. 29 at UAB
Oct. 6 at Marshall
Oct. 13 UTEP
Oct. 20 RICE
Nov. 3 at Arkansas
Nov. 10 at Houston
Nov. 17 UCF
Nov. 24 at SMU

UAB
Sept. 1 TROY
Sept. 15 at South Carolina
Sept. 22 at Ohio State
Sept. 29 TULSA
Oct. 6 S.E. LOUISIANA
Oct. 13 at Houston
Oct. 20 EAST CAROLINA
Oct. 27 at Tulane
Nov. 3 at Southern Miss
Nov. 10 MARSHALL
Nov. 17 MEMPHIS
Nov. 24 at UCF

UCF
Aug. 30 at Akron
Sept. 8 at Ohio State
Sept. 15 FIU
Sept. 29 MISSOURI
Oct. 6 EAST CAROLINA
Oct. 13 SOUTHERN MISS
Oct. 20 at Memphis
Oct. 27 at Marshall
Nov. 3 SMU
Nov. 10 at UTEP
Nov. 17 at Tulsa
Nov. 24 UAB

UTEP
Sept. 1 OKLAHOMA
Sept. 8 at Ole Miss
Sept. 15 NEW MEXICO STATE
Sept. 22 at Wisconsin
Sept. 29 at East Carolina
Oct. 6 SMU
Oct. 13 at Tulsa
Oct. 20 TULANE
Oct. 27 at Houston
Nov. 10 UCF
Nov. 17 at Southern Miss
Nov. 24 RICE

I-A INDEPENDENTS

ARMY
Sept. 8 at San Diego State
Sept. 15 NORTHERN ILLINOIS
Sept. 22 at Wake Forest
Sept. 29 STONY BROOK
Oct. 6 BOSTON COLLEGE
Oct. 13 KENT STATE
Oct. 20 at Eastern Michigan
Oct. 27 BALL STATE
Nov. 3 AIR FORCE
Nov. 10 at Rutgers
Nov. 17 TEMPLE
Dec. 8 vs. Navy (Philadelphia, PA)

BYU
Sept. 1 WASHINGTON STATE
Sept. 8 WEBER STATE
Sept. 15 at Utah
Sept. 22 at Boise State
Sept. 29 HAWAII
Oct. 5 UTAH STATE
Oct. 13 OREGON STATE
Oct. 20 at Notre Dame
Oct. 27 at Georgia Tech
Nov. 10 IDAHO
Nov. 17 at San Jose State
Nov. 24 at New Mexico State

NAVY
Sept. 1 vs. Notre Dame (Dublin, Ireland)
Sept. 15 at Penn State
Sept. 22 VMI
Sept. 29 SAN JOSE STATE
Oct. 6 at Air Force
Oct. 13 at Central Michigan
Oct. 20 INDIANA
Oct. 27 at East Carolina
Nov. 3 FLORIDA ATLANTIC
Nov. 10 at Troy
Nov. 17 TEXAS STATE
Dec. 8 vs. Army (Philadelphia, PA)

NOTRE DAME
Sept. 1 vs. Navy (Dublin, Ireland)
Sept. 8 PURDUE
Sept. 15 at Michigan State
Sept. 22 MICHIGAN
Oct. 6 vs. Miami (Chicago)
Oct. 13 STANFORD
Oct. 20 BYU
Oct. 27 at Oklahoma
Nov. 3 PITTSBURGH
Nov. 10 at Boston College
Nov. 17 WAKE FOREST
Nov. 24 at USC

MAC

AKRON
Aug. 30 UCF
Sept. 8 at FIU
Sept. 15 MORGAN STATE
Sept. 22 at Tennessee
Sept. 29 MIAMI (OH)
Oct. 6 BOWLING GREEN
Oct. 13 at Ohio
Oct. 20 NORTHERN ILLINOIS
Oct. 27 at Central Michigan
Nov. 3 at Kent State
Nov. 10 MASSACHUSETTS
Nov. 20 at Toledo

BALL STATE
Aug. 30 EASTERN MICHIGAN
Sept. 8 at Clemson
Sept. 15 at Indiana
Sept. 22 SOUTH FLORIDA
Sept. 29 at Kent State
Oct. 6 NORTHERN ILLINOIS
Oct. 13 WESTERN MICHIGAN
Oct. 20 at Central Michigan
Oct. 27 at Army
Nov. 6 at Toledo
Nov. 14 OHIO
Nov. 23 at Miami (OH)

BOWLING GREEN
Sept. 1 at Florida
Sept. 8 IDAHO
Sept. 15 at Toledo
Sept. 22 at Virginia Tech
Sept. 29 RHODE ISLAND
Oct. 6 at Akron
Oct. 13 MIAMI (OH)
Oct. 20 at Massachusetts
Oct. 27 EASTERN MICHIGAN
Nov. 7 at Ohio
Nov. 17 KENT STATE
Nov. 23 vs. Buffalo (Columbus, OH)

BUFFALO
Sept. 1 at Georgia
Sept. 8 MORGAN STATE
Sept. 19/20 KENT STATE
Sept. 29 at Connecticut
Oct. 6 at Ohio
Oct. 13 at Northern Illinois
Oct. 20 PITTSBURGH
Oct. 27 TOLEDO
Nov. 3 MIAMI (OH)
Nov. 10 WESTERN MICHIGAN
Nov. 17 at Massachusetts
Nov. 23 vs. Bowling Green (Columbus, OH)

CENTRAL MICHIGAN
Aug. 30 SOUTHEAST MISSOURI STATE
Sept. 8 MICHIGAN STATE
Sept. 22 at Iowa
Sept. 29 at Northern Illinois
Oct. 6 at Toledo
Oct. 13 NAVY
Oct. 20 BALL STATE
Oct. 27 AKRON
Nov. 3 WESTERN MICHIGAN
Nov. 10 at Eastern Michigan
Nov. 17 MIAMI (OH)
Nov. 23 at Massachusetts

EASTERN MICHIGAN
Aug. 30 at Ball State
Sept. 8 ILLINOIS STATE
Sept. 15 at Purdue
Sept. 22 at Michigan State
Oct. 6 KENT STATE
Oct. 13 TOLEDO
Oct. 20 ARMY
Oct. 27 at Bowling Green
Nov. 1 at Ohio
Nov. 10 CENTRAL MICHIGAN
Nov. 17 at Western Michigan
Nov. 23 NORTHERN ILLINOIS

KENT STATE
Aug. 30 Towson
Sept. 8 at Kentucky
Sept. 19/20 at Buffalo
Sept. 29 BALL STATE
Oct. 6 at Eastern Michigan
Oct. 13 at Army
Oct. 20 WESTERN MICHIGAN
Oct. 27 at Rutgers
Nov. 3 AKRON
Nov. 10 at Miami (OH)
Nov. 17 at Bowling Green
Nov. 23 OHIO

MASSACHUSETTS
Aug. 30 at Connecticut
Sept. 8 vs. Indiana (Boston)
Sept. 15 at Michigan
Sept. 22 at Miami (OH)
Sept. 29 OHIO
Oct. 6 at Western Michigan
Oct. 20 BOWLING GREEN
Oct. 27 at Vanderbilt
Nov. 3 at Northern Illinois
Nov. 10 at Akron
Nov. 17 BUFFALO
Nov. 23 CENTRAL MICHIGAN

MIAMI (OH)
Sept. 1 at Ohio State
Sept. 8 SOUTHERN ILLINOIS
Sept. 15 at Boise State
Sept. 22 MASSACHUSETTS
Sept. 29 at Akron
Oct. 6 at Cincinnati
Oct. 13 at Bowling Green
Oct. 27 OHIO
Nov. 3 at Buffalo
Nov. 10 KENT STATE
Nov. 17 at Central Michigan
Nov. 23 BALL STATE

NORTHERN ILLINOIS
Sept. 1 vs. Iowa (Chicago)
Sept. 8 TENNESSEE-MARTIN
Sept. 15 at Army
Sept. 22 KANSAS
Sept. 29 CENTRAL MICHIGAN
Oct. 6 at Ball State
Oct. 13 BUFFALO
Oct. 20 at Akron
Oct. 27 at Western Michigan
Nov. 3 MASSACHUSETTS
Nov. 14 TOLEDO
Nov. 23 at Eastern Michigan

OHIO
Sept. 1 at Penn State
Sept. 8 NEW MEXICO STATE
Sept. 15 at Marshall
Sept. 22 NORFOLK STATE
Sept. 29 at Massachusetts
Oct. 6 BUFFALO
Oct. 13 AKRON
Oct. 27 at Miami (OH)
Nov. 1 EASTERN MICHIGAN
Nov. 7 BOWLING GREEN
Nov. 14 at Ball State
Nov. 23 at Kent State

TOLEDO
Sept. 1 at Arizona
Sept. 8 at Wyoming
Sept. 15 BOWLING GREEN
Sept. 22 COASTAL CAROLINA
Sept. 29 at Western Michigan
Oct. 6 CENTRAL MICHIGAN
Oct. 13 at Eastern Michigan
Oct. 20 CINCINNATI
Oct. 27 at Buffalo
Nov. 6 BALL STATE
Nov. 14 at Northern Illinois
Nov. 20 AKRON

WESTERN MICHIGAN
Sept. 1 at Illinois
Sept. 8 EASTERN ILLINOIS
Sept. 15 at Minnesota
Sept. 22 CONNECTICUT
Sept. 29 TOLEDO
Oct. 6 MASSACHUSETTS
Oct. 13 at Ball State
Oct. 20 at Kent State
Oct. 27 NORTHERN ILLINOIS
Nov. 3 at Central Michigan
Nov. 10 at Buffalo
Nov. 17 EASTERN MICHIGAN

MOUNTAIN WEST

AIR FORCE
Sept. 1 IDAHO STATE
Sept. 8 at Michigan
Sept. 22 at UNLV
Sept. 29 COLORADO STATE
Oct. 6 NAVY
Oct. 13 at Wyoming
Oct. 20 NEW MEXICO
Oct. 27 NEVADA
Nov. 3 at Army
Nov. 10 at San Diego State
Nov. 17 HAWAII
Nov. 24 at Fresno State

BOISE STATE
Aug. 31 at Michigan State
Sept. 15 MIAMI (OH)
Sept. 22 BYU
Sept. 29 at New Mexico
Oct. 6 at Southern Miss
Oct. 13 FRESNO STATE
Oct. 20 UNLV
Oct. 27 at Wyoming
Nov. 3 SAN DIEGO STATE
Nov. 10 at Hawaii
Nov. 17 COLORADO STATE
Nov. 24 at Nevada

COLORADO STATE
Sept. 2 vs. Colorado (Denver)
Sept. 8 NORTH DAKOTA STATE
Sept. 15 at San Jose State
Sept. 22 UTAH STATE
Sept. 29 at Air Force
Oct. 6 FRESNO STATE
Oct. 13 at San Diego State
Oct. 27 HAWAII
Nov. 3 at Wyoming
Nov. 10 UNLV
Nov. 17 at Boise State
Nov. 24 NEW MEXICO

FRESNO STATE
Sept. 1 WEBER STATE
Sept. 8 at Oregon
Sept. 15 COLORADO
Sept. 22 at Tulsa
Sept. 29 SAN DIEGO STATE
Oct. 6 at Colorado State
Oct. 13 at Boise State
Oct. 20 WYOMING
Oct. 27 at New Mexico
Nov. 3 HAWAII
Nov. 10 at Nevada
Nov. 24 AIR FORCE

HAWAII
Sept. 1 at USC
Sept. 15 LAMAR
Sept. 22 NEVADA
Sept. 29 at BYU
Oct. 6 at San Diego State
Oct. 13 NEW MEXICO
Oct. 27 at Colorado State
Nov. 3 at Fresno State
Nov. 10 BOISE STATE
Nov. 17 at Air Force
Nov. 24 UNLV
Dec. 1 SOUTH ALABAMA

NEVADA
Sept. 1 at California
Sept. 8 SOUTH FLORIDA
Sept. 15 NORTHWESTERN STATE
Sept. 22 at Hawaii
Sept. 29 at Texas State
Oct. 6 WYOMING
Oct. 13 at UNLV
Oct. 20 SAN DIEGO STATE
Oct. 27 at Air Force
Nov. 10 FRESNO STATE
Nov. 17 at New Mexico
Nov. 24 BOISE STATE

NEW MEXICO
Sept. 1 SOUTHERN
Sept. 8 at Texas
Sept. 15 at Texas Tech
Sept. 22 at New Mexico State
Sept. 29 BOISE STATE
Oct. 6 TEXAS STATE
Oct. 13 at Hawaii
Oct. 20 at Air Force
Oct. 27 FRESNO STATE
Nov. 3 at UNLV
Nov. 10 WYOMING
Nov. 17 NEVADA
Nov. 24 at Colorado State

SAN DIEGO STATE
Sept. 1 at Washington
Sept. 8 ARMY
Sept. 15 NORTH DAKOTA
Sept. 22 SAN JOSE STATE
Sept. 29 at Fresno State
Oct. 6 HAWAII
Oct. 13 COLORADO STATE
Oct. 20 at Nevada
Oct. 27 UNLV
Nov. 3 at Boise State
Nov. 10 AIR FORCE
Nov. 24 at Wyoming

UNLV
Aug. 30 MINNESOTA
Sept. 8 NORTHERN ARIZONA
Sept. 15 WASHINGTON STATE
Sept. 22 AIR FORCE
Sept. 29 at Utah State
Oct. 6 at Louisiana Tech
Oct. 13 NEVADA
Oct. 20 at Boise State
Oct. 27 at San Diego State
Nov. 3 NEW MEXICO
Nov. 10 at Colorado State
Nov. 17 WYOMING
Nov. 24 at Hawaii

WYOMING
Sept. 1 at Texas
Sept. 8 TOLEDO
Sept. 15 CAL POLY
Sept. 22 at Idaho
Oct. 6 at Nevada
Oct. 13 AIR FORCE
Oct. 20 at Fresno State
Oct. 27 BOISE STATE
Nov. 3 COLORADO STATE
Nov. 10 at New Mexico
Nov. 17 at UNLV
Nov. 24 SAN DIEGO STATE

Wrangler

NATIONAL SCHEDULES

PAC-12

ARIZONA
Sept. 1 TOLEDO
Sept. 8 OKLAHOMA STATE
Sept. 15 SOUTH CAROLINA STATE
Sept. 22 at Oregon
Sept. 29 OREGON STATE
Oct. 6 at Stanford
Oct. 20 WASHINGTON
Oct. 27 USC
Nov. 3 at UCLA
Nov. 10 COLORADO
Nov. 17 at Utah
Nov. 23 ARIZONA STATE

ARIZONA STATE
Sept. 1 NORTHERN ARIZONA
Sept. 8 ILLINOIS
Sept. 15 at Missouri
Sept. 22 UTAH
Sept. 29 at California
Oct. 11 at Colorado
Oct. 18 OREGON
Oct. 27 UCLA
Nov. 3 at Oregon State
Nov. 10 at USC
Nov. 17 WASHINGTON STATE
Nov. 23 at Arizona

CALIFORNIA
Sept. 1 NEVADA
Sept. 8 SOUTHERN UTAH
Sept. 15 at Ohio State
Sept. 22 at USC
Sept. 29 ARIZONA STATE
Oct. 6 UCLA
Oct. 13 at Washington State
Oct. 20 STANFORD
Oct. 27 at Utah
Nov. 2 WASHINGTON
Nov. 10 OREGON
Nov. 17 at Oregon State

COLORADO
Sept. 2 vs. Colorado State (Denver)
Sept. 8 SACRAMENTO STATE
Sept. 15 at Fresno State
Sept. 22 at Washington State
Sept. 29 UCLA
Oct 11 ARIZONA STATE
Oct 20 at USC
Oct 27 at Oregon
Nov 3 STANFORD
Nov 10 at Arizona
Nov 17 WASHINGTON
Nov 23 UTAH

OREGON
Sept. 1 ARKANSAS STATE
Sept. 8 FRESNO STATE
Sept. 15 TENNESSEE TECH
Sept. 22 ARIZONA
Sept. 29 vs. Washington St. (Seattle)
Oct 6 WASHINGTON
Oct 18 at Arizona State
Oct 27 COLORADO
Nov 3 at USC
Nov 10 at California
Nov 17 STANFORD
Nov 24 at Oregon State

OREGON STATE
Sept. 1 NICHOLLS STATE
Sept. 8 WISCONSIN
Sept. 22 at UCLA
Sept. 29 at Arizona
Oct. 6 WASHINGTON STATE
Oct. 13 at BYU
Oct. 20 UTAH
Oct. 27 at Washington
Nov. 3 ARIZONA STATE
Nov. 10 at Stanford
Nov. 17 CALIFORNIA
Nov. 24 OREGON

STANFORD
Sept. 1 SAN JOSE STATE
Sept. 8 DUKE
Sept. 15 USC
Sept. 27 at Washington
Oct. 6 ARIZONA
Oct. 13 at Notre Dame
Oct. 20 at California
Oct. 27 WASHINGTON STATE
Nov. 3 at Colorado
Nov. 10 OREGON STATE
Nov. 17 at Oregon
Nov. 24 at UCLA

UCLA
Sept. 1 at Rice
Sept. 8 NEBRASKA
Sept. 15 HOUSTON
Sept. 22 OREGON STATE
Sept. 29 at Colorado
Oct. 6 at California
Oct. 13 UTAH
Oct. 27 at Arizona State
Nov. 3 ARIZONA
Nov. 10 at Washington State
Nov. 17 USC
Nov. 24 STANFORD

USC
Sept. 1 HAWAII
Sept. 8 vs. Syracuse (East Rutherford, N.J.)
Sept. 15 at Stanford
Sept. 22 CALIFORNIA
Oct. 4 at Utah
Oct. 13 at Washington
Oct. 20 COLORADO
Oct. 27 at Arizona
Nov. 3 OREGON
Nov. 10 ARIZONA STATE
Nov. 17 at UCLA
Nov. 24 NOTRE DAME

UTAH
Aug. 30 NORTHERN COLORADO
Sept. 7 at Utah State
Sept. 15 BYU
Sept. 22 at Arizona State
Oct. 4 USC
Oct. 13 at UCLA
Oct. 20 at Oregon State
Oct. 27 CALIFORNIA
Nov. 3 WASHINGTON STATE
Nov. 10 at Washington
Nov. 17 ARIZONA
Nov. 23 at Colorado

WASHINGTON
Sept. 1 SAN DIEGO STATE
Sept. 8 at LSU
Sept. 15 PORTLAND STATE
Sept. 27 STANFORD
Oct. 6 at Oregon
Oct. 13 USC
Oct. 20 at Arizona
Oct. 27 OREGON STATE
Nov. 2 at California
Nov. 10 UTAH
Nov. 17 at Colorado
Nov. 23 at Washington State

WASHINGTON STATE
Sept. 1 at BYU
Sept. 8 EASTERN WASHINGTON
Sept. 15 at UNLV
Sept. 22 COLORADO
Sept. 29 vs. Oregon (Seattle)
Oct. 6 at Oregon State
Oct. 13 CALIFORNIA
Oct. 27 at Stanford
Nov. 3 at Utah
Nov. 10 UCLA
Nov. 17 at Arizona State
Nov. 23 WASHINGTON

SEC

ALABAMA
Sept. 1 vs. Michigan (Arlington, TX)
Sept. 8 WESTERN KENTUCKY
Sept. 15 at Arkansas
Sept. 22 FAU
Sept. 29 OLE MISS
Oct. 13 at Missouri
Oct. 20 at Tennessee
Oct. 27 MISSISSIPPI STATE
Nov. 3 at LSU
Nov. 10 TEXAS A&M
Nov. 17 WESTERN CAROLINA
Nov. 24 AUBURN

ARKANSAS
Sept. 1 JACKSONVILLE STATE
Sept. 8 ULM
Sept. 15 ALABAMA
Sept. 22 RUTGERS
Sept. 29 at Texas A&M
Oct. 6 at Auburn
Oct. 13 KENTUCKY
Oct. 27 OLE MISS
Nov. 3 TULSA
Nov. 10 at South Carolina
Nov. 17 at Mississippi State
Nov. 24 LSU

AUBURN
Sept. 1 vs. Clemson (Atlanta, GA)
Sept. 8 at Mississippi State
Sept. 15 ULM
Sept. 22 LSU
Oct. 6 ARKANSAS
Oct. 13 at Ole Miss
Oct. 20 at Vanderbilt
Oct. 27 TEXAS A&M
Nov. 3 NEW MEXICO STATE
Nov. 10 GEORGIA
Nov. 17 ALABAMA A&M
Nov. 24 at Alabama

FLORIDA
Sept. 1 BOWLING GREEN
Sept. 8 at Texas A&M
Sept. 15 at Tennessee
Sept. 22 KENTUCKY
Oct. 6 LSU
Oct. 13 at Vanderbilt
Oct. 20 SOUTH CAROLINA
Oct. 27 vs.Georgia (Jacksonville)
Nov. 3 MISSOURI
Nov. 10 LOUISIANA
Nov. 17 JACKSONVILLE STATE
Nov. 24 at Florida State

GEORGIA
Sept. 1 BUFFALO
Sept. 8 at Missouri
Sept. 15 FAU
Sept. 22 VANDERBILT
Sept. 29 TENNESSEE
Oct. 6 at South Carolina
Oct. 20 at Kentucky
Oct. 27 vs. Florida (Jacksonville)
Nov. 3 OLE MISS
Nov. 10 at Auburn
Nov. 17 GEORGIA SOUTHERN
Nov. 24 GEORGIA TECH

KENTUCKY
Sept. 2 at Louisville
Sept. 8 KENT STATE
Sept. 15 WESTERN KENTUCKY
Sept. 22 at Florida
Sept. 29 SOUTH CAROLINA
Oct. 6 MISSISSIPPI STATE
Oct. 13 at Arkansas
Oct. 20 GEORGIA
Oct. 27 at Missouri
Nov. 3 VANDERBILT
Nov. 17 SAMFORD
Nov. 24 at Tennessee

LSU
Sept. 1 NORTH TEXAS
Sept. 8 WASHINGTON
Sept. 15 IDAHO
Sept. 22 at Auburn
Sept. 29 TOWSON
Oct. 6 at Florida
Oct. 13 SOUTH CAROLINA
Oct. 20 at Texas A&M
Nov. 3 ALABAMA
Nov. 10 MISSISSIPPI STATE
Nov. 17 OLE MISS
Nov. 24 at Arkansas

OLE MISS
Sept. 1 CENTRAL ARKANSAS
Sept. 8 UTEP
Sept. 15 TEXAS
Sept. 22 at Tulane
Sept. 29 at Alabama
Oct. 6 TEXAS A&M
Oct. 13 AUBURN
Oct. 27 at Arkansas
Nov. 3 at Georgia
Nov. 10 VANDERBILT
Nov. 17 at LSU
Nov. 24 MISSISSIPPI STATE

MISSISSIPPI STATE
Sept. 1 JACKSON STATE
Sept. 8 AUBURN
Sept. 15 at Troy
Sept. 22 SOUTH ALABAMA
Oct. 6 at Kentucky
Oct. 13 TENNESSEE
Oct. 20 MIDDLE TENNESSEE
Oct. 27 at Alabama
Nov. 3 TEXAS A&M
Nov. 10 at LSU
Nov. 17 ARKANSAS
Nov. 24 at Ole Miss

MISSOURI
Sept. 1 S.E. LOUISIANA
Sept. 8 GEORGIA
Sept. 15 ARIZONA STATE
Sept. 22 at South Carolina
Sept. 29 at UCF
Oct. 6 VANDERBILT
Oct. 13 ALABAMA
Oct. 27 KENTUCKY
Nov. 3 at Florida
Nov. 10 at Tennessee
Nov. 17 SYRACUSE
Nov. 24 at Texas A&M

SOUTH CAROLINA
Aug. 30 at Vanderbilt
Sept. 8 EAST CAROLINA
Sept. 15 UAB
Sept. 22 MISSOURI
Sept. 29 at Kentucky
Oct. 6 GEORGIA
Oct. 13 at LSU
Oct. 20 at Florida
Oct. 27 TENNESSEE
Nov. 10 ARKANSAS
Nov. 17 WOFFORD
Nov. 24 at Clemson

TENNESSEE
Aug. 31 vs. NC State (Atlanta)
Sept. 8 GEORGIA STATE
Sept. 15 FLORIDA
Sept. 22 AKRON
Sept. 29 at Georgia
Oct. 13 at Mississippi State
Oct. 20 ALABAMA
Oct. 27 at South Carolina
Nov. 3 TROY
Nov. 10 MISSOURI
Nov. 17 at Vanderbilt
Nov. 24 KENTUCKY

TEXAS A&M
Aug. 30 at Louisiana Tech
Sept. 8 FLORIDA
Sept. 15 at SMU
Sept. 22 SOUTH CAROLINA STATE
Sept. 29 ARKANSAS
Oct. 6 at Ole Miss
Oct. 20 LSU
Oct. 27 at Auburn
Nov. 3 at Mississippi State
Nov. 10 at Alabama
Nov. 17 SAM HOUSTON STATE
Nov. 24 MISSOURI

VANDERBILT
Aug. 30 SOUTH CAROLINA
Sept. 8 at Northwestern
Sept. 15 PRESBYTERIAN
Sept. 22 at Georgia
Oct. 6 at Missouri
Oct. 13 FLORIDA
Oct. 20 AUBURN
Oct. 27 MASSACHUSETTS
Nov. 3 at Kentucky
Nov. 10 at Ole Miss
Nov. 17 TENNESSEE
Nov. 24 at Wake Forest

SUN BELT

ARKANSAS STATE
Sept. 1 at Oregon
Sept. 8 MEMPHIS
Sept. 15 at Nebraska
Sept. 22 ALCORN STATE
Sept. 29 WESTERN KENTUCKY
Oct. 4 at FIU
Oct. 13 SOUTH ALABAMA
Oct. 23 at Louisiana
Nov. 3 at North Texas
Nov. 8 ULM
Nov. 17 at Troy
Dec 1 MIDDLE TENNESSEE

FAU
Aug. 31 WAGNER
Sept. 8 at Middle Tennessee
Sept. 15 at Georgia
Sept. 22 at Alabama
Sept. 29 NORTH TEXAS
Oct. 13 at ULM
Oct. 20 at South Alabama
Oct. 27 TROY
Nov. 3 at Navy
Nov. 10 at Western Kentucky
Nov. 16 FIU
Dec. 1 LOUISIANA

FIU
Sept. 1 at Duke
Sept. 8 AKRON
Sept. 15 at UCF
Sept. 22 LOUISVILLE
Sept. 29 at Louisiana
Oct. 4 ARKANSAS STATE
Oct. 13 MIDDLE TENNESSEE
Oct. 20 at Troy
Oct. 27 WESTERN KENTUCKY
Nov. 3 at South Alabama
Nov. 16 at FAU
Nov. 24 ULM

LOUISIANA
Sept. 1 LAMAR
Sept. 8 at Troy
Sept. 15 at Oklahoma State
Sept. 29 FIU
Oct. 6 TULANE
Oct. 16 at North Texas
Oct. 23 ARKANSAS STATE
Nov. 3 at ULM
Nov. 10 at Florida
Nov. 17 WESTERN KENTUCKY
Nov. 24 SOUTH ALABAMA
Dec. 1 at FAU

MIDDLE TENNESSEE
Aug. 30 McNEESE STATE
Sept. 8 FAU
Sept. 15 at Memphis
Sept. 29 at Georgia Tech
Oct. 6 ULM
Oct. 13 at FIU
Oct. 20 at Mississippi State
Oct. 27 NORTH TEXAS
Nov. 1 at Western Kentucky
Nov. 17 at South Alabama
Nov. 24 TROY
Dec 1 at Arkansas State

NORTH TEXAS
Sept. 1 at LSU
Sept. 8 TEXAS SOUTHERN
Sept. 15 at Kansas State
Sept. 22 TROY
Sept. 29 at FAU
Oct. 6 at Houston
Oct. 16 LOUISIANA
Oct. 27 at Middle Tennessee
Nov. 3 ARKANSAS STATE
Nov. 10 SOUTH ALABAMA
Nov. 17 at ULM
Nov. 24 at Western Kentucky

SOUTH ALABAMA
Aug. 30 UTSA
Sept. 8 NICHOLLS STATE
Sept. 15 at NC State
Sept. 22 at Mississippi State
Sept. 29 TROY
Oct. 13 at Arkansas State
Oct. 20 FAU
Oct. 27 at ULM
Nov. 3 FIU
Nov. 10 at North Texas
Nov. 17 MIDDLE TENNESSEE
Nov. 24 at Louisiana
Dec. 1 at Hawaii

TROY
Sept. 1 at UAB
Sept. 8 LOUISIANA
Sept. 15 MISSISSIPPI STATE
Sept. 22 at North Texas
Sept. 29 at South Alabama
Oct. 11 WESTERN KENTUCKY
Oct. 20 FIU
Oct. 27 at FAU
Nov. 3 at Tennessee
Nov. 10 NAVY
Nov. 17 ARKANSAS STATE
Nov. 24 at Middle Tennessee

ULM
Sept. 8 at Arkansas
Sept. 15 at Auburn
Sept. 22 BAYLOR
Sept. 29 at Tulane
Oct. 6 at Middle Tennessee
Oct. 13 FAU
Oct. 20 at Western Kentucky
Oct. 27 SOUTH ALABAMA
Nov. 3 LOUISIANA
Nov. 8 at Arkansas State
Nov. 17 NORTH TEXAS
Nov. 24 at FIU

WESTERN KENTUCKY
Sept. 1 AUSTIN PEAY
Sept. 8 at Alabama
Sept. 15 at Kentucky
Sept. 22 SOUTHERN MISS
Sept. 29 at Arkansas State
Oct. 11 at Troy
Oct. 20 ULM
Oct. 27 at FIU
Nov. 1 MIDDLE TENNESSEE
Nov. 10 FAU
Nov. 17 at Louisiana
Nov. 24 NORTH TEXAS

WAC

IDAHO
Aug. 30 EASTERN WASHINGTON
Sept. 8 at Bowling Green
Sept. 15 at LSU
Sept. 22 WYOMING
Sept. 29 at North Carolina
Oct. 6 NEW MEXICO STATE
Oct. 13 at Texas State
Oct. 20 at Louisiana Tech
Nov. 3 SAN JOSE STATE
Nov. 10 at BYU
Nov. 17 UTSA
Nov. 24 at Utah State

LOUISIANA TECH
Aug. 30 TEXAS A&M
Sept. 8 at Houston
Sept. 15 RICE
Sept. 22 at Illinois
Sept. 29 at Virginia
Oct. 6 UNLV
Oct. 20 IDAHO
Oct. 27 at New Mexico State
Nov. 3 UTSA
Nov. 10 at Texas State
Nov. 17 UTAH STATE
Nov. 24 at San Jose State

NEW MEXICO STATE
Sept. 1 SOUTHERN
Sept. 8 at Texas
Sept. 15 at Texas Tech
Sept. 22 at New Mexico State
Sept. 29 BOISE STATE
Oct. 6 TEXAS STATE
Oct. 13 at Hawaii
Oct. 20 at Air Force
Oct. 27 FRESNO STATE
Nov. 3 at UNLV
Nov. 10 WYOMING
Nov. 17 NEVADA
Nov. 24 at Colorado State

SAN JOSE STATE
Sept. 1 at Stanford
Sept. 8 UC Davis
Sept. 15 COLORADO STATE
Sept. 22 at San Diego State
Sept. 29 at Navy
Oct. 13 UTAH STATE
Oct. 20 at UTSA
Oct. 27 TEXAS STATE
Nov. 3 at Idaho
Nov. 10 at New Mexico State
Nov. 17 BYU
Nov. 24 LOUISIANA TECH

TEXAS STATE
Sept. 1 at Houston
Sept. 8 TEXAS TECH
Sept. 22 STEPHEN F. AUSTIN
Sept. 29 NEVADA
Oct. 6 at New Mexico
Oct. 13 IDAHO
Oct. 27 at San Jose State
Nov. 3 at Utah State
Nov. 10 LOUISIANA TECH
Nov. 17 at Navy
Nov. 24 at UTSA
Dec. 1 NEW MEXICO STATE

UTAH STATE
Aug. 30 SOUTHERN UTAH
Sept. 7 UTAH
Sept. 15 at Wisconsin
Sept. 22 at Colorado State
Sept. 29 UNLV
Oct. 5 at BYU
Oct. 13 at San Jose State
Oct. 20 NEW MEXICO STATE
Oct. 27 at UTSA
Nov. 3 TEXAS STATE
Nov. 17 at Louisiana Tech
Nov. 24 IDAHO

UTSA
Aug. 30 at South Alabama
Sept. 8 TEXAS A&M-COMMERCE
Sept. 15 at Georgia State
Sept. 22 N.W. OKLAHOMA STATE
Sept. 29 at New Mexico State
Oct. 13 at Rice
Oct. 20 SAN JOSE STATE
Oct. 27 UTAH STATE
Nov. 3 at Lousiana Tech
Nov. 10 McNEESE STATE
Nov. 17 at Idaho
Nov. 24 TEXAS STATE

KEEPING THE *faith*

BY BILL SORRELL

Landry Jones is a knee slapper.

When something tickles Jones' funny bone more than normal, he gets a high pitch and automatically slaps his knee.

"Landry is really old school in that sense," said Oklahoma punter Tress Way, who along with other teammates of the Oklahoma quarterback have had countless knee-slapping moments.

There will be more in 2012. Jones decided to stay in school for his senior year.

"I prayed about it for awhile and felt like God was telling me to come back. I really want to enjoy my senior year and my teammates. This is my last go-round and it's a little bit more urgent. There are goals I want to achieve," he said.

Among goals are winning the national championship, the Heisman Trophy and becoming the career leader in victories for an OU quarterback. He enters this season with 29 wins, three behind Steve Davis' record of 32 from 1973-75.

In 2011, Jones moved to first in career passing yards with 12,379, passing Heisman Trophy winners Jason White and Sam Bradford. With 93 career touchdown passes, he broke Bradford's school record. Jones finished sixth nationally last season in total offense, averaging 343.3 yards per game. In 2010, he won the Sammy Baugh Trophy as the nation's top college passer.

Photo by Matt Kartozian-US PRESSWIRE

LANDRY JONES

Despite the accolades, the quote Jones says most is that he is a Christian who happens to play football, not a football player who is a Christian.

Jones is the Sooners' spiritual leader. When middle linebacker Austin Box died accidentally in May 2011 at age 22 of pulmonary edema and aspiration pneumonia, Jones was in Haiti on a mission trip. At a memorial service, Jones spoke about how precious life is. He told teammates if they were unsure that Christ was in their life, they needed to talk with him and get it straight with God.

"Him doing that in front of the team meeting shows how big a factor Christ is in his life," said Way, who is also an evangelical Christian.

Through the influence of "great" parents Kevin and Kellye Jones, Landry made a profession of faith in Christ at age six. He was baptized at First Baptist Church in his hometown of Artesia, N.M.

He attends Antioch Community Church in Norman where pastor Chris Bennett has led him in discipleship. "He is the person that kind of sharpens my sword and works on things in my walk," said Jones.

One of Jones' favorite Bible verses is about a life rooted in Christ. Colossians 2:6-7 reads "Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus as Lord, walk in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught and overflowing with thankfulness."

"I'm sure it sounds like a cliché, without Jesus I don't think I would have made it at OU," he said.

During the first part of college, he rebelled against God.

"I believed in Him, but I didn't follow Him. After the first year, I got to the point I was so sad and depressed. If life is not fun, it is not worth it. I was an angry young man."

Slowly he began to follow Christ, whom now is his life, he said. Jones changed his lifestyle. He changed the "girls situation" and the "drinking."

"I changed the way I was living. I was taking a stand. I understood deeper. I needed God in my life. The lifestyle I live (now) is a habit. I understand the deeper meaning of who Jesus is in my life. He is my source of happiness, a comfort in hard times and hope there is a better life.

"It's knowing that when everything is screwed up in your life, everything is going to be OK. Being an athlete that is huge; everything is based on your performance. Everyone judges on wins and losses. You persevere through hard times. With Jesus, there is a big picture of things. At the end of life, you are going to heaven and that is basically the only thing that matters."

Prior to the 2011 season, Jones became engaged to OU point guard Whitney Hand. They are planning to be married in July.

The way he treats his fiance sets him apart said Way, who has listened as Jones relates Christ to the church, whom the Bible says is His bride, and how God "is always pursuing us."

"We are looked at as a thing of beauty, just the way he talks about Whitney," said Way.

Hand has taught Jones, 23, about how to pursue her and encouraged him in the godly pursuit of other people.

"Being engaged, getting married, you realize how to put someone else above you and start being selfless and give your life away to someone else," said Jones.

While he is expected to be a first-round NFL draft choice in 2013, the ministry is also in his plans.

"I'm still trying to figure that out and what it is going to look like. I don't know if I'm going to be a pastor. I'm not sure what God has in store for me." He has also discussed church planting.

"You are to be bold about it and tell people about Him. God is real. If they don't respond, you pray for them. You never give up on people."

A member of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes leadership team, Jones also leads a weekly Bible study for teammates. They recently studied Matthew.

It is Jones' work ethic and competitiveness that gives him an edge.

"On the field, Landry does a great job of reminding us that we are playing for the guy next to us," said Way.

Jones, who was named for Dallas Cowboys coaching legend Tom Landry (Jones is not a Cowboys fan), encourages players to spend time with Christ.

"The best advice he has given me in my walk with Christ is in order for a relationship to get stronger, you have to spend time with that person. That means spending more time with God and reading His word and in prayer," said Way, whose strong leg may land him in the NFL. Averaging 45.7 yards per punt last season, Way, an honorable mention All-Big 12 selection, had a school record 58 punts more than 50 yards each.

What Jones exhibits most, said Way, is joy and love.

"This may sound kind of cheesy, but it is love. He has the biggest heart of anybody I have ever met. It is not so much how many people he cares about, it is how much he cares about those people."

Jones would want people to say that he is a man who loves Jesus and follows Him, is a great leader, a great friend and is loyal.

During the 2011 mission trip to Haiti, Jones, along with the women's basketball team and members of the football team, worked in the Mission of Hope, an orphanage. He saw poverty first hand.

It made a big difference in his life. "You see the family of God in another light. You see how the body of Christ comes together. It gives you a heart for those people. You see how strong they are. You see how God was all they had and it was enough.

"When we choose God and not worldly things and do something for Him, it fills us with joy," said Jones, who plays the guitar and went sky diving three years ago. "Christianity is about how you live, about how you love people and the kind of choices you make."

Football is a gift said Jones and he plans to use it for Christ.

"How I use football is like the platform; the game plan of how to evangelize and show people who Jesus is."

NATIONAL RECRUITING

By Chris Nee
Rivals.com

1 Alabama

THE PARTICULARS: ATH – 2, DB – 4, DT – 5, K – 1, LB – 5, OL – 3, QB – 1, RB – 2, TE – 1, WR – 2

THE BUZZ: Alabama's class was led by a trio of five-star prospects in Geismar (La.) Dutchtown safety **Landon Collins**, Daphne (Ala.) running back **T.J. Yeldon**, and Panama City (Fla.) Arnold athlete **Eddie Williams**.

The Crimson Tide addressed needs at wide receiver by adding a trio of prospects from Florida. In addition to Williams, Jacksonville (Fla.) First Coast wide receiver **Chris Black** and Miami (Fla.) Northwestern wide receiver **Amari Cooper** also have the ability to contribute early.

On the defensive side of the ball, Alabama signed a strong group at linebacker with five four-star prospects in the group. Madison (Ala.) Bob Jones four-star inside linebacker **Reggie Ragland** is an imposing force at 6-4, 245 pounds. Daphne (Ala.) High four-star outside linebacker **Ryan Anderson** has the capability to come down to the defensive line, and be a difficult speed-rusher off the edge.

Alabama also addressed a need for depth and talent at defensive back by adding a pair from junior college in Thatcher (Ariz.) Eastern Arizona Junior College four-star cornerback **Travell Dixon** and Booneville (Miss.) Northeast Mississippi Community College three-star cornerback **Deion Belue**. Joining Collins from the high school ranks in the secondary will be Atlanta (Ga.) St. Pius X School four-star cornerback **Geno Smith**.

2 Texas

THE PARTICULARS: ATH – 5, DB – 2, DE – 3, DT – 4, K – 1, LB – 5, OL – 4, QB – 1, RB – 1, WR – 2

THE BUZZ: Texas once again competed for the recruiting national title with a strong group of 28 signees. The group was led by a pair of in-state five-star prospects in running back **Johnathan Gray** from Aledo and defensive tackle **Malcom Brown** from Brenham. Gray is an ultra-productive back with great size, while Brown is a thick, dominating force in the middle of the defensive line.

Mack Brown and company added several talented offensive linemen with Harker Heights (Texas) High four-star offensive tackle **Camrhon Hughes**, Pearland (Texas) Dawson four-star offensive tackle **Kennedy Estelle**, DeSoto (Texas) High four-star offensive guard **Curtis Riser** and Senatoba (Miss.) Northwest Mississippi Community College four-star offensive tackle **Donald Hawkins**.

They also addressed needs on the defensive line from both the high school and junior college ranks. Joining Brown from the high school ranks is Humble (Texas) four-star defensive tackle **Paul Boyette Jr.** and Dallas (Texas) Bishop Dunne three-star defensive tackle **Alex Norman**. Scooba (Miss.) East Mississippi Community College three-star defensive tackle **Brandon Moore** is a massive 6-6, 335-pound defensive tackle from the junior college ranks.

Two other prospects who could make an early impact at Texas are Austin (Texas) four-star wide receiver **Cayleb Jones** and Athens (Texas) four-star athlete **Kendall Sanders**.

3 Florida

THE PARTICULARS: DB – 4, DE – 5, DT – 3, K – 1, LB – 2, OL – 2, QB – 1, RB – 1, TE – 2, WR – 2

THE BUZZ: Will Muschamp and staff put together a very strong class in their first full year of recruiting for the Gators. The class is led by a pair of five-star defensive ends in Shelby (N.C.) Crest's **Jonathan Bullard** and St. Petersburg (Fla.) Lakewood's **Dante Fowler Jr.** The Gators also attained the services of five-star offensive tackle **D.J. Humphries** from Charlotte (N.C.) Mallard Creek. Another standout is Land O'Lakes (Fla.) High four-star tight end **Kent Taylor**, who was the top ranked tight end in the nation.

In total, Florida added five defensive ends. Joining Bullard and Fowler Jr. is a trio of three-star prospects in Fort Lauderdale (Fla.) St. Thomas Aquinas' **Bryan Cox Jr.**, Clemmons (N.C.) West Forsyth's **Alex McCalister** and Tyrone (Ga.) Sandy Creek's **Quinteze Williams**. The defensive tackle group was led by two big men in the middle in Scooba (Miss.) East Mississippi Community College four-star defensive tackle **Damien Jacobs** and Venice (Fla.) four-star defensive tackle **Dante Phillips**.

The Gators also added some top-end talent in the defensive secondary with a pair of in-state signees in Melbourne (Fla.) Holy Trinity four-star safety **Marcus Maye** and Bradenton (Fla.) Southeast four-star cornerback **Brian Poole**.

Joining Taylor at tight end is Warminster (Pa.) Archbishop Wood Catholic four-star tight end **Colin Thompson**, who is an elite blocking tight end.

Seffner (Fla.) Armwood four-star running back **Matt Jones** is a big back that is a very capable receiver out of the backfield.

Another skill position player who brings a lot of versatility to the Gators offensive attack will be Citra (Fla.) North Marion four-star wide receiver **Latroy Pittman**.

Boynton Beach (Fla.) offensive guard **Jessamen Dunker** joins Humphries as the only other offensive lineman signee in the class, but he will provide the Gators with a big and athletic offensive guard down the road.

4 Ohio State

THE PARTICULARS: ATH – 1, DB – 4, DE – 3, DT – 1, LB – 4, OL – 5, QB – 1, RB – 2, TE – 1, WR – 3

THE BUZZ: The Buckeyes finished as strong as anyone in the nation after the hiring of Urban Meyer. Their 25-man class is led by two five-star defensive ends — Harrisburg (Pa.) Bishop McDevitt's **Noah Spence** and Cincinnati (Ohio) Taft's **Adolphus Washington**.

Joining Spence and Washington at defensive end will be Canton (Ohio) McKinley four-star defensive end **Se'von Pittman**.

Playing beside that strong defensive end class will be Glen Ellyn (Ill.) Glenbard West four-star defensive tackle **Tommy Schutt**.

Another defensive standout is West Roxbury (Mass.) Catholic Memorial four-star inside linebacker **Camren Williams**, the top player from Massachusetts. He will be joined at linebacker by Galen (Ohio) Olentangy four-star outside linebacker **Josh Perry**.

The offensive class is headlined by Windsor (Colo.) four-star offensive tackle **Joey O'Connor**. Joining him in the trenches will be Vandalia (Ohio) Butler four-star offensive tackle **Taylor Decker**, Cleveland (Ohio) Heights four-star offensive tackle **Kyle Dodson**, Pickerington (Ohio) Central three-star offensive guard **Jacoby Boren**, and Pickerington (Ohio) North three-star offensive guard **Pat Elflein**.

Some offensive playmakers in the class include Columbus (Ohio) St. Francis DeSales four-star running back **Warren Ball**, Canton (Ohio) Glenoak four-star running back **Bri'onte Dunn**, South Bend (Ind.) Washington four-star athlete **David Perkins**, and Fork Union (Va.) Military Academy four-star wide receiver **Michael Thomas**.

5 Stanford

THE PARTICULARS: DB – 3, DE – 3, DT – 2, LB – 2, OL – 7, RB – 1, WR – 4

THE BUZZ: Nearly one-third of Stanford's signing class was along the offensive line, where they brought in seven prospects. The depth and quality of the group is impressive. Tempe (Ariz.) Corona Del Sol five-star offensive tackle **Andrus Peat** and San Clemente (Calif.) High five-star offensive tackle **Kyle Murphy** lead the group. Four of the other five signees along the offensive line are four-star prospects — Eden Prairie (Minn.) High offensive tackle **Nick Davidson**, Brentwood (Tenn.) Brentwood Academy offensive tackle **Graham Shuler**, Pleasant Grove (Utah) High offensive guard **Brandon Fanaika**, and Puyallup (Wash.) High offensive guard **Joshua Garnett**.

Another standout signee for the Cardinal is Atwater (Calif.) Buhach five-star defensive end **Aziz Shittu**. Honolulu (Hawaii) Punahou four-star defensive end **Luke Kaumatule** and College Park (Ga.) Woodward Academy four-star defensive tackle **Jordan Watkins** are another two to keep an eye on.

Ashburn (Va.) Briar Woods four-star safety **Alex Carter** and Leesburg (Fla.) High four-star outside linebacker **Noor Davis** can make an early contribution.

Top offensive skill position signees include Oklahoma City (Okla.) Heritage Hall four-star running back **Barry Sanders** and Los Angeles (Calif.) Loyola four-star wide receiver **Kodi Whitfield**.

6 Florida State

THE PARTICULARS: DB – 3, DE – 1, DT – 4, K – 2, LB – 2, OL – 2, QB – 2, RB – 1, TE – 1, WR –1

THE BUZZ: Florida State signed three five-star prospects, including a pair of defensive tackles. Hueytown (Ala.) dual-threat quarterback **Jameis Winston** can do damage with his arm and legs. Defensively, Denton (Texas) Ryan defensive tackle **Mario Edwards** and Washington (D.C.) Friendship Collegiate Academy defensive tackle **Eddie Goldman** are a strong duo in the middle.

The defensive line class is strong for the Seminoles with the likes of Prattville (Ala.) High four-star defensive tackle **Justin Shanks** and Mobile (Ala.)

Davidson four-star defensive end **Chris Casher** joining Edwards and Goldman.

The Seminoles are excited about Stone Mountain (Ga.) four-star linebacker **Ukeme Eligwe** and Jacksonville (Fla.) First Coast four-star linebacker **Reggie Northrup**.

The defensive back group is led by four-star cornerback **Ronald Darby** from Oxon Hill (Md.) Potomac and a pair of four-star safeties in Ocala (Fla.) Vanguard's **P.J. Williams** and San Antonio (Texas) Brandeis' **Colin Blake**.

Winston is coming in along with some good offensive talent. Cape Coral (Fla.) Island Coast four-star running back **Mario Pender** is a nice mix of speed and size. Orlando (Fla.) Boone four-star wide receiver **Marvin Bracy** has elite speed. Orange (Calif.) Lutheran four-star tight end **Christo Kourtzidis** is a capable blocker who is also a threat down the field in the passing game.

The offensive line group has a pair of junior college signees in Mission Viejo (Calif.) Saddleback Community College offensive tackle **Menelik Watson** and Roswell (N.M.) New Mexico Military Institute three-star offensive tackle **Daniel Glauser**.

7 Michigan

THE PARTICULARS: DB – 4, DE – 3, DT – 3, LB – 4, OL – 4, RB – 3, TE – 2, WR – 2

THE BUZZ: Brady Hoke and Michigan landed a special player in Kansas City (Mo.) Park Hill five-star defensive tackle **Ondre Pipkins**. Pipkins is massive at 6-3, 325 pounds and is surprisingly athletic when pursuing quarterbacks and ball carriers.

Another top signee is Lakewood (Ohio) St. Edward five-star offensive tackle **Kyle Kalis**, considered the top prospect in Ohio for the 2012 class.

A couple of other talented offensive linemen taking their ability to the Wolverines are Carlsbad (Calif.) La Costa Canyon four-star offensive tackle **Erik Magnuson** and Nashville (Tenn.) Montgomery Bell Academy four-star offensive tackle **Blake Bars**.

Switching back to defense, Michigan landed a strong linebacker group led by four-star inside linebacker **Royce Jenkins-Stone** from Detroit (Mich.) Cass Tech and a pair of four-star outside linebackers in Orchard Lake (Mich.) St. Mary's **James Ross** and Cincinnati (Ohio) Colerain's **Joe Bolden**.

A pair of offensive skill players to keep an eye on are Detroit (Mich.) Martin Luther King four-star running back **Dennis Norfleet** and West Des Moines (Iowa) Dowling four-star wide receiver **Amara Darboh**. Norfleet is a versatile running back who is great at creating in space, while Darboh is a bigger target at wide receiver with excellent speed.

8 Southern California

THE PARTICULARS: DB – 3, DE – 3, LB – 2, OL – 3, RB – 1, TE – 1, WR – 2

THE BUZZ: USC signed just 15 prospects, but only two of them are ranked below four-star status. Low on quantity, but extremely high on quality.

All three five-star prospects in the class play on the offensive side of the ball. Tampa (Fla.) Berkeley Prep five-star wide receiver **Nelson Agholor** is a versatile offensive weapon who can make an instant impact. Lakewood (Wash.) Lakes five-star offensive tackle **Zach Banner** is massive at 6-9, 310 pounds, while Encino (Calif.) Crespi five-star offensive guard **Jordan Simmons** also has his fair share of bulk at 6-5, 333 pounds.

Joining Banner and Simmons up-front on the offensive line is Santa Margarita (Calif.) Catholic four-star offensive tackle **Max Tuerk**.

The Trojans didn't just dip into Florida for Agholor, they also got a very talented defensive end from the Sunshine State in Daytona Beach (Fla.) Mainland four-star **Leonard Williams**.

The defensive back haul was also very good as they landed Woodland Hills (Calif.) Pierce Community College four-star safety **Gerald Bowman**, the nation's top junior college player. Joining Bowman will be Inglewood (Calif.) High four-star cornerback **Devian Shelton** and Pasadena (Calif.) Muir four-star cornerback **Kevon Seymour**.

9 Miami

THE PARTICULARS: ATH – 1, DB – 8, DE – 5, DT – 3, LB – 3, OL – 3, QB – 3, RB – 2, WR – 5

THE BUZZ: Miami signed the largest class in the nation with 33 prospects. The Hurricanes added much needed depth, especially at defensive back, along the defensive line, at quarterback and at wide receiver.

The top two prospects in Miami's class hail from right around the corner from the campus. Miami (Fla.) Norland five-star all-purpose back **Randy 'Duke' Johnson** was arguably the top high school player in the Sunshine State. Miramar (Fla.) five-star cornerback **Tracy Howard** was ranked the top college prospect from Florida in the 2012 class.

Joining Howard at the top of the class is Miami (Fla.) Columbus four-star safety **Deon Bush**.

Other top defensive signees include Tampa (Fla.) Jefferson four-star defensive end **Tyriq McCord**, Fort Lauderdale (Fla.) St. Thomas Aquinas four-star defensive end **Jelani Hamilton**, and Stone Mountain (Ga.) Stephenson four-star linebacker **Raphael Kirby**.

Offensive standouts include four-star wide receivers **Robert Lockhart** and **Malcolm Lewis**. Lockhart, from Fork Union (Va.) Fork Union Military Academy, has good size and runs precise routes. Lewis, who was teammates with Howard at Miramar (Fla.) High, is a quick wide receiver with sure hands.

Miami (Fla.) Norland four-star offensive tackle **Ereck Flowers** has a high ceiling as an edge blocker and could be an early contributor.

Wellington (Fla.) Palm Beach Central four-star athlete **Angelo Jean-Louis** could contribute on either side of the ball.

10 Auburn

THE PARTICULARS: DB – 3, DE – 1, DT – 1, LB – 2, OL – 7, QB – 2, RB – 1, TE – 2, WR – 2

THE BUZZ: Gene Chizik and Auburn signed a top 10 class on the shoulders of a strong offensive line group. Out of the seven signees on the offensive line, five of them are ranked as four-star prospects. The top offensive line signee for the Tigers was Palm Beach Gardens (Fla.) four-star offensive tackle **Avery Young**. Joining Young at the tackle spot is four-star **Shane Callahan** from Parker (Colo.) Chaparral, four-star **Patrick Miller** from West Palm Beach (Fla.) Dwyer, and four-star **Jordan Diamond** from Chicago (Ill.) Simeon. Castle Rock (Colo.) Valor Christian four-star offensive guard **Alex Kozan** also opted for Auburn.

Both wide receiver signees — Tyrone (Ga.) Sandy Creek four-star **JaQuay Williams** and Miami Beach (Fla.) four-star **Ricardo Louis** — offer good size and athleticism.

Four-star tight end **Ricky Parks** from Hogansville (Ga.) Callaway and four-star running back **Jovon Robinson** from Memphis (Tenn.) Wooddale are also solid offensive additions for the Tigers.

Fairburn (Ga.) Creekside cornerback **Joshua Holsey** was the top defensive signee for Auburn in 2012. He and Birmingham (Ala.) Woodlawn four-star outside linebacker **Cassanova McKinzy** have the potential to make an early contribution.

11 Oklahoma

THE PARTICULARS: ATH – 2, DB – 2, DE – 3, LB – 1, OL – 4, QB – 1, RB – 3, TE – 4, WR – 5

THE BUZZ: The Sooners top signee was a prospect who they originally landed the services of in 2011 — five-star wide receiver **Trey Metoyer** — who had to go to prep school in order to qualify.

Metoyer leads a strong wide receiver group that also includes St. Louis (Mo.) DeSmet four-star wide receiver **Durron Neal**, Oklahoma City (Okla.) Heritage Hall four-star wide receiver **Sterling Shepard**, Inglewood (Calif.) High four-star wide receiver **Derrick Woods** and Roseville (Calif.) Sierra Community College four-star wide receiver **Courtney Gardner**.

The offensive class also included four-star quarterback **Trevon Knight** of San Antonio (Texas) Ronald Reagan, four-star running back **Alex Ross** of Jenks (Okla.), four-star tight end **Taylor McNamara** of San Diego (Calif.) Westview, and a pair of four-star offensive lineman in Santa Clarita (Calif.) College of the Canyons offensive tackle **Will Latu** and Apopka (Fla.) **Ty Darlington**.

The top defensive signee in the class was Seffner (Fla.) Armwood four-star outside linebacker **Eric Striker**. Overall, just six of the signees for the Sooners were on the defensive side of the ball.

12 Georgia

THE PARTICULARS: ATH – 2, DE – 4, DT – 2, K – 2, OL – 3, QB – 1, RB – 3, TE – 1, WR – 1

THE BUZZ: Georgia landed two five-star prospects in the 2012 class. Jacksonville (Fla.) Bolles five-star offensive tackle **John Theus** will join his brother, long snapper Nathan Theus, in Athens. The top prospect in the Peach State in 2012, Valdosta (Ga.) Lowndes five-star athlete **Josh Harvey-Clemons**, decided to play for the Bulldogs.

In total, 11 of the 19 signees come from the Peach State. Joining Harvey-Clemons at the top of that group is Hamilton (Ga.) Harris County four-star defen-

sive end **Jordan Jenkins**, Millen (Ga.) Jenkins County four-star defensive tackle **Jonathan Taylor**, Eastman (Ga.) Dodge County four-star defensive end **Leonard Floyd**, and Tucker (Ga.) four-star defensive end **Josh Dawson**.

After Theus, the top offensive prospects for Georgia are two running backs who both hail from North Carolina. Raleigh (N.C.) Millbrook four-star all-purpose back **Keith Marshall** is a talented runner with great speed, while Tarboro (N.C.) four-star running back **Todd Gurley** has a great combination of speed and size.

13 UCLA

THE PARTICULARS: ATH – 3, DB – 4, DE – 3, DT – 1, K – 1, LB – 1, OL – 5, QB – 1, RB – 1, TE – 1, WR – 5

THE BUZZ: Jim Mora immediately got to work after being hired at UCLA and put together a strong finish over the final month of the recruiting season. His top get was five-star defensive tackle **Ellis McCarthy** from Monrovia (Calif.) High.

Other prospects landed over the final month of the process include Old Tappan (N.J.) High four-star athlete **Devin Fuller**, Westlake Village (Calif.) Oaks Christian four-star wide receiver **Jordan Payton**, Chandler (Ariz.) High four-star wide receiver **Javon Williams**, and Murrieta (Calif.) Vista Murrieta four-star defensive end **Jeremy Castro**.

Westlake Village (Calif.) Oaks Christian four-star defensive back **Ishmael Adams** pledged to Mora and company after their arrival.

One holdover from the previous staff that is capable of making an immediate impact is Compton (Calif.) Dominguez four-star offensive tackle **Lacy Westbrook**.

14 Clemson

THE PARTICULARS: ATH – 3, DB – 3, DE – 2, DT – 3, K – 1, LB – 1, OL – 5, QB – 1, WR – 1

THE BUZZ: Clemson put together a solid class that added talented depth and some prospects that could contribute early on in their careers.

The top prospect in the class was Tallahassee (Fla.) North Florida Christian four-star safety **Travis Blanks**. The top offensive prospect was Charlotte (N.C.) Phillip O Berry Academy of Technology four-star wide receiver **Germone Hopper**.

Jonesboro (Ark.) Jonesboro Senior four-star athlete **Zac Brooks** could find his way onto the field early. His primary position will be as a running back, but his unique combination of speed and size at 6-2, 180 pounds makes him valuable in Clemson's spread attack.

Defensive tackle **Carlos Watkins**, a four-star prospect from Forest City (N.C.) Chase could find his way onto the field early.

Buffalo (N.Y.) St. Joseph's four-star quarterback **Chad Kelly** likely won't be called upon early in his career at Clemson, but he is a good athlete with a big arm who can fill the void that will be left when Tajh Boyd concludes his career.

15 Texas A&M

THE PARTICULARS: ATH – 1, DB – 3, DE – 5, DT – 1, LB – 1, OL – 3, QB – 1, RB – 1, WR – 3

THE BUZZ: Texas A&M prepared for their move to the SEC by signing a strong class led by one of the nation's best offensive players. Spring (Texas) Dekaney five-star running back **Trey Williams** is a dynamic weapon who had an ultra-productive high school career, with more than 8,000 rushing yards over his final three seasons and scoring over 80 rushing touchdowns.

The offensive class also includes Houston (Texas) four-star quarterback **Matt Davis** and Dallas (Texas) Skyline four-star wide receiver **Thomas Johnson**. Davis can make things happen with his arms and his legs and shows great leadership skills. Johnson could work inside or outside and is very good after the catch. The best offensive lineman in the group is Missouri City (Texas) Elkins four-star center **Mike Matthews**, who was the nation's top center in the 2012 class.

The defensive class is led by Mesquite (Texas) Horn four-star cornerback **DeVante Harris**. Harris is a 5-11, 160-pound cornerback. Four-star outside linebacker **Jordan Richmond** of Denton (Texas) Ryan also make his way onto the field early.

Carthage (Texas) High four-star athlete **Edward Pope** (6-3, 170) was a defensive back for most of his high school career, but had a great senior season at wide receiver. He could contribute on either side of the ball.

16 Oregon

THE PARTICULARS: ATH – 1, DB – 3, DE – 5, DT – 1, K – 1, LB – 1, OL – 1, QB – 2, RB – 1, TE – 2, WR – 3

THE BUZZ: Chip Kelly and Oregon signed 21 prospects in their 2012 class. The top prospect was Elk Grove (Calif.) Pleasant Grove four-star defensive end **Arik Armstead**. Armstead could play on either side of the ball, as he also projects as an offensive tackle at 6-8, 280 pounds

Armstead wasn't the only standout defensive end in the Oregon's class. He was joined by Portland (Oregon) Central Catholic four-star defensive end **Alex Balducci** and Honolulu (Hawaii) Punahou four-star defensive end **DeForest Buckner**.

Hillsboro (Ore.) Liberty four-star outside linebacker **Brett Bafaro** was another top defensive signee for the Ducks.

On the offensive side, Oregon loaded up with top-tier talent at the skill positions. Rocklin (Calif.) Whitney four-star quarterback **Jake Rodrigues** has excellent arm strength and accuracy.

Rodrigues will like targets such as Cincinnati (Ohio) Taft four-star wide receiver **Dwayne Stanford** and Missouri City (Texas) Hightower four-star wide receiver **Bralon Addison**. Oregon also added two athletic tight ends in Lyndhurst (Ohio) Brush four-star **Pharaoh Brown** and Aurora (Colo.) Grandview four-star **Evan Baylis**. San Jose (Calif.) Valley Christian four-star running back **Byron Marshall** is one of the nation's best.

17 Tennessee

THE PARTICULARS: ATH – 3, DB – 3, DE – 3, DT – 2, K – 1, LB – 1, QB – 1, RB – 2, TE – 1, WR – 4

THE BUZZ: The Volunteers were looking for immediate help at wide receiver and they turned to the junior college ranks in Hutchinson (Kansas) Hutchinson Community College four-star wideout **Cordarrelle Patterson**. Patterson, who is 6-4, 205 pounds, is a big outside target who can to stretch the field.

Patterson leads a strong group of wide receivers. He is joined by Norcross (Ga.) High four-star wide receiver **Jason Croom**, Jackson (Tenn.) Christian four-star wide receiver **Drae Bowles**, and Orlando (Fla.) Edgewater four-star wide receiver **Alton Howard**.

They will be happy to know that they are coming in along with a talented quarterback in Fruit Cove (Fla.) Bartram Trail four-star signal-caller **Nathan Peterman**. Peterman is a smart quarterback with a strong arm, nice touch.

Four-star athlete **Davante Bourque** from Crowley (La.) High will likely end up at running back. The 6-3, 200-pounder provides good size in the offensive backfield and is explosive with the ball in his hands.

The defensive class is headlined by Dallas (Texas) Wilmer-Hutchins four-star safety **LaDarrell McNeil**. Joining McNeill in the secondary will be fellow four-star cornerback **Deion Bonner** of Columbus (Ga.) Carver.

A pair of four-star defensive tackles also are making their way to Knoxville. Milledgeville (Ga.) Georgia Military College defensive tackle **Daniel McCullers** was a top junior college prospect. Flint (Mich.) Powers Catholic defensive tackle **Danny O'Brien** is coming from the high school ranks.

18 LSU

THE PARTICULARS: ATH – 1, DB – 5, DE – 1, K – 1, LB – 5, OL – 5, QB – 1, TE – 1, WR – 3

THE BUZZ: Despite coming off a season where the Tigers played for the national championship, they find themselves down in the pack a bit with regards to recruiting rankings. While the class doesn't have any five-star prospects or headline grabbers, it does include a lot of talent.

One big need addressed by Les Miles and his staff was along the offensive line. They brought in five linemen led by New Orleans (La.) Edna Karr four-star offensive tackle **Derek Edinburgh** and Buford (Ga.) four-star offensive guard **Vadal Alexander**.

The Tigers are also bringing in skill talent on the offensive side of the ball in two outside receivers. Pompano Beach (Fla.) Blanche Ely four-star wide receiver **Avery Johnson** and Breaux Bridge (La.) four-star wide receiver **Travin Dural** are both big, athletic targets.

The top defensive signee for the Tigers was New Orleans (La.) O. Perry Walker four-star cornerback **Dwayne Thomas**. Other top defensive signees include Katy (Texas) Morton Ranch four-star defensive end **Danielle Hunter**, Oxford (Ala.) four-star outside linebacker **Kwon Alexander** and Patterson (La.) four-star outside linebacker **Lorenzo Phillips**.

Four-star athlete **Lamar Louis** from Breaux Bridge (La.) High will also likely end up on defense, starting his career at linebacker.

19 South Carolina

THE PARTICULARS: ATH – 2, DB – 5, DE, – 2, DT – 1, K – 1, LB – 2, OL – 5, QB – 1, RB – 2, TE – 1, WR – 3

THE BUZZ: The Gamecocks landed two major offensive weapons in their 2012 signing class in Stone Mountain (Ga.) Stephenson four-star running back **Mike Davis** and Lexington (S.C.) High four-star wide receiver **Shaq Roland**. Davis is a productive back with good size and speed who can do work in-between the tackles or on the outside. Roland is a big-play wide receiver who can score in a variety of ways.

Another wide receiver to keep an eye on will be Monroe (N.C.) Sun Valley four-star **Jody Fuller**. The 6-0, 200-pound wide receiver with 4.5 speed could find a role early in his career with the Gamecocks.

Four-star athlete **Jerell Adams**, who is making his way to South Carolina after spending a year at Fork Union (Va.) Military Academy, will likely start out as a tight end.

The five-man offensive line class is led by four-star tackle **Brock Stadnik** of Greensboro (N.C.) Western Guilford and four-star guard **Joe Harris** of Lithonia (Ga.).

The top defensive signees for Steve Spurrier and his staff are a pair of safeties — Cape Coral (Fla.) Island Coast four-star **Jordan Diggs** and College Park (Ga.) Banneker four-star **Chaz Elder**.

20 Notre Dame

THE PARTICULARS: ATH – 2, DB – 4, DE – 1, DT – 2, OL – 3, QB – 1, RB – 1, WR – 3

THE BUZZ: Notre Dame landed its biggest commitment in mid-January when five-star quarterback **Gunner Kiel** of Columbus (Ind.) East High flipped his commitment from LSU and immediately enrolled in South Bend. Kiel, the top-ranked pro-style quarterback in the country, has the potential to be one of the next great college quarterbacks.

In the future, Scottsdale (Ariz.) Chaparral four-star wide receiver **Davonte Neal** will likely be a popular target for Kiel. Neal is a smooth wide receiver with great speed who is excellent after the catch.

Austintown (Ohio) Austintown Fitch four-star running back **William Mahone** will be another key cog in Notre Dame's offensive attack. Everett (Wash.) Mariner four-star athlete **KeiVarae Russell** could end up in the backfield with Mahone or on the outside as a wide receiver, but his future is definitely on the offensive side of the ball.

Las Vegas (Nev.) Bishop Gorman four-star offensive tackle **Ronnie Stanley** is the top offensive linemen making his way to South Bend.

On defense, East Orange (N.J.) Don Bosco Prep four-star safety **Elijah Shumate** will likely be looked upon to contribute early in a thin defensive backfield for Notre Dame.

The front seven added some bulk on defense when a pair of four-star defensive tackles — Indianapolis (Ind.) Warren Central's **Sheldon Day** and Rochester (N.Y.) Aquinas Institute's **Jarron Jones** — signed with Notre Dame.

Fresno (Calif.) Washington Union four-star cornerback **Tee Shapard** was a top signee for the Irish and enrolled early in South Bend, but he has already withdrawn from school and departed from Brian Kelly's team.

21 Washington

THE PARTICULARS: ATH – 3, DB – 4, DE – 4, DT – 1, K – 2, LB – 1, OL – 5, QB – 2, RB – 2, WR – 1

THE BUZZ: Washington's class was headlined by Sacramento (Calif.) Grant five-star safety **Shaq Thompson**. Thompson pledged his services to the Huskies and gives them a physical, imposing safety to build a defense around. He was considered the top prospect in California for the 2012 class.

On the offensive side of the ball, Steve Sarkisian is getting a pair of talented quarterbacks to work with in Denver (Colo.) Mullen four-star **Cyler Miles** and Mercer Island (Wash.) High four-star **Jeff Lindquist**.

Four-star athlete **Jaydon Mickens** likely ends up on the offensive side of the ball as a wide receiver. The 5-8, 170-pounder is a quick, elusive target in the open field who will likely play the slot position.

On defense, Compton (Calif.) Dominguez four-star cornerback **Brandon Beaver** will join Thompson in the secondary.

Patterson (Calif.) High four-star defensive end **Pio Vatuvei** could also find his way onto the field early on in his career.

22 Virginia Tech

THE PARTICULARS: ATH – 3, DB – 5, DE – 3, DT – 2, LB – 5, OL – 3, RB – 3, TE – 1, WR – 3

THE BUZZ: The top player in Frank Beamer's 2012 signing class was Midlothian (Va.) Clover Hill four-star athlete **Joel Caleb**. Caleb will likely end up a wide receiver when he arrives in Blacksburg and he will be a nice weapon for the Hokies. He is a physical player at 6-2, 201 pounds with the ability to make big plays in a variety of ways.

Caleb wasn't the only top offensive weapon lured to Virginia Tech in 2012, as a pair of running back signees are worth keeping an eye on. Chesapeake (Va.) Oscar Smith four-star running back **J.C. Coleman** and Exton (Pa.) Downingtown East four-star running back **Drew Harris** are both explosive. Coleman is more of a small, shifty back, while Harris is a physical, tough runner.

On defense, the Hokies loaded up at linebacker, signing a total of five at the position. Chesterfield (Va.) Lloyd C. Bird four-star outside linebacker **Deon Clarke** is the top prospect in the group. Also keep an eye on Clifton (Va.) Centreville four-star outside linebacker **Ken Ekanem** and Ringgold (Va.) Dan River four-star outside linebacker **Trey Edmunds**.

Miami (Fla.) Central four-star cornerback **Donaldven Manning** isn't physically intimidating, but he has excellent quickness and good instincts making him a perfect fit in the Virginia Tech secondary.

23 California

THE PARTICULARS: ATH – 2, DB – 2, DT – 1, K – 1, LB – 2, OL – 4, QB – 1, RB – 2, WR – 4

THE BUZZ: The top prospect in the Golden Bears' 2012 signing class is a talented pro-style quarterback Danville (Calif.) San Ramon Valley four-star signal-caller **Zach Kline**. Kline has shown the ability to attack all parts of the field with a big arm and good accuracy.

He will have a nice group of receivers stepping on campus along with him, led by a trio of four-star wideouts — Bellflower (Calif.) St. John Bosco's **Bryce Treggs**, Lakewood's (Calif.) **Darius Power**, and Upland (Calif.) High's **Kenny Lawler**. There is also a good chance that Lakewood (Wash.) Lakes four-star athlete **Cedric Dozier** ends up catching passes.

The offensive line signing class was led by Richmond (Calif.) Salesia four-star offensive tackle **Freddie Tagaloa**.

Cal signed just one defensive prospect considered a four-star or higher and that was Concord (Calif.) De La Salle inside linebacker **Michael Barton**.

24 Rutgers

THE PARTICULARS: ATH – 3, DE – 2, K – 1, LB – 2, OL – 5, QB – 1, RB – 1, WR – 4

THE BUZZ: Despite going through a coaching change on the verge of signing day, Rutgers was able to retain a majority of its commitments and add a few down the stretch to finish with a top 25 class.

The top commitment for the Scarlet Knights came from Ramsey (N.J.) Don Bosco Prep five-star defensive end **Darius Hamilton,** who opted to stay home for his college career just days before signing day.

Another top addition on the defensive side was Sicklerville (N.J.) Timber Creek four-star inside linebacker **Quanzell Lambert**. The 6-2, 230-pound inside linebacker could be an early contributor for the Big East program.

The offensive class for Rutgers was led by Boyertown (Pa.) Boyertown Area Senior four-star offensive tackle **Chris Muller** and fellow four-star offensive tackle **J.J. Denman** from Fairless Hills (Pa.) Pennsbury.

Ramsey (N.J.) Don Bosco Prep four-star wide receiver **Leonte Carroo** is the top skill position player coming in on the offensive side of the ball.

25 Nebraska

THE PARTICULARS: ATH – 2, DB – 1, DE – 2, DT – 2, LB – 4, OL – 2, QB – 1, RB – 1, TE – 1, WR – 1

THE BUZZ: Nebraska signed a smaller class that was split down the middle with regards to offensive and defensive signees. The top signee in the class came on the defensive side of the ball in Thatcher (Ariz.) Eastern Arizona Junior College four-star cornerback **Mohammed Seisay**. Seisay can be an immediate contributor for the Cornhuskers.

Other possible early contributors on defense for Bo Pelini and his staff will be Riverside (Calif.) Riverside Community College four-star outside linebacker **Zaire Anderson** and Akron (Ohio) Hoban four-star defensive end **Greg McMullen**.

On offense, Arvada (Colo.) Arvada West four-star offensive tackle **Paul Thurston** is the top signee for the Huskers.

Lombard (Ill.) Montini four-star wide receiver **Jordan Westerkamp** is the top skill position player on offense making his way to Lincoln next year.

Winnfield (La.) Winnfield Senior four-star athlete **Alonzo Moore** has the capability to contribute on either side of the ball upon his arrival at Nebraska.

100 FOR 2012

INCOMING FRESHMEN

TOP 100 PLAYERS BY POSITION

Rk	Name	Ht./Wt.	Hometown/School	College
QUARTERBACKS				
10.	Jameis Winston	6-4/200	Hueytown (AL) Hueytown	Florida State
20.	Gunner Kiel	6-4/220	Columbus (IN) East	Notre Dame
35.	Cyler Miles	6-4/220	Denver (CO) Mullen	Washington
44.	Zach Kline	6-2/210	Danville (CA) San Ramon Valley	California
59.	Tanner Mangum	6-3/195	Eagle (ID) Eagle	BYU
RUNNING BACKS				
5.	Johnathan Gray	5-11/190	Aledo (TX) Aledo	Texas
12.	T.J. Yeldon	6-2/205	Daphne (AL) Daphne	Alabama
15.	Trey Williams	5-8/175	Spring (TX) Dekaney	Texas A&M
30.	Randy Johnson	5-9/180	Miami (FL) Miami Norland	Miami (FL)
38.	Mario Pender	6-0/185	Cape Coral (FL) Island Coast	Florida State
42.	Todd Gurley	6-1/195	Tarboro (NC) Tarboro	Georgia
48.	Keith Marshall	5-11/190	Raleigh (NC) Millbrook	Georgia
55.	Rushel Shell	6-0/210	Aliquippa (PA) Hopewell	Pittsburgh
63.	Mike Davis	5-10/200	Stone Mountain (GA) Stephenson	South Carolina
WIDE RECEIVERS				
1.	Dorial Green-Beckham	6-6/220	Springfield (MO) Hillcrest	Missouri
8.	Stefon Diggs	6-0/185	Olney (MD) Our Lady Of Good Counsel	Maryland
18.	Nelson Agholor	6-2/180	Tampa (FL) Berkeley Prep	USC
34.	Thomas Johnson	6-0/180	Dallas (TX) Skyline	Texas A&M
41.	Cayleb Jones	6-3/198	Austin (TX) Austin	Texas
45.	Amari Cooper	6-1/175	Miami (FL) Northwestern	Alabama
49.	Deontay Greenberry	6-3/187	Fresno (CA) Washington Union	Houston
58.	Chris Black	5-11/170	Jacksonville (FL) First Coast	Alabama
62.	Durron Neal	6-1/195	State Louis (MO) DeSmet	Oklahoma
66.	Shaq Roland	6-1/170	Lexington (SC) Lexington	South Carolina
75.	Germone Hopper	6-0/165	Charlotte (NC) Phillip O Berry Acad Of Tech	Clemson
81.	Bryce Treggs	5-11/171	Bellflower (CA) State John Bosco	California
87.	Gabriel Marks	6-0/175	Los Angeles (CA) Venice	Washington State
90.	JaQuay Williams	6-3/204	Tyrone (GA) Sandy Creek	Auburn
93.	Jordan Payton	6-2/199	Westlake Village (CA) Oaks Christian	UCLA
TIGHT ENDS				
54.	Kent Taylor	6-5/220	Land O'Lakes (FL) Land O' Lakes	Florida
OFFENSIVE LINEMEN				
2.	D.J. Humphries	6-5/265	Charlotte (NC) Mallard Creek	Florida
16.	Zach Banner	6-9/310	Lakewood (WA) Lakes	USC
19.	Kyle Murphy	6-7/275	San Clemente (CA) San Clemente	Stanford
22.	Kyle Kalis	6-5/302	Lakewood (OH) State Edward	Michigan
23.	John Theus	6-6/292	Jacksonville (FL) Bolles	Georgia
29.	Jordan Simmons	6-5/333	Encino (CA) Crespi	USC
32.	Andrus Peat	6-7/305	Tempe (AZ) Corona Del Sol	Stanford
33.	Joshua Garnett	6-5/295	Puyallup (WA) Puyallup	Stanford
46.	Max Tuerk	6-6/294	Santa Margarita (CA) Santa Margarita	USC
52.	Isaac Seumalo	6-3/280	Corvallis (OR) Corvallis	Oregon State
67.	Kennedy Estelle	6-7/300	Pearland (TX) Dawson	Texas
74.	Avery Young	6-6/273	Palm Beach Gardens (FL) Palm Beach Gardens	Auburn
78.	Erik Magnuson	6-6/275	Carlsbad (CA) La Costa Canyon	Michigan
96.	Curtis Riser	6-3/283	DeSoto (TX) DeSoto	Texas
100.	Chris Muller	6-6/287	Boyertown (PA) Boyertown Area Senior	Rutgers
DEFENSIVE ENDS				
6.	Jonathan Bullard	6-4/255	Shelby (NC) Crest	Florida
9.	Noah Spence	6-4/245	Harrisburg (PA) Bishop McDevitt	Ohio State
11.	Darius Hamilton	6-4/245	Ramsey (NJ) Don Bosco Prep	Rutgers
25.	Adolphus Washington	6-4/230	Cincinnati (OH) Taft	Ohio State
27.	Aziz Shittu	6-3/275	Atwater (CA) Buhach	Stanford
28.	Dante Fowler Jr.	6-3/232	State Petersburg (FL) Lakewood	Florida
36.	Chris Casher	6-4/225	Mobile (AL) Davidson	Florida State
50.	Eli Harold	6-4/215	Virginia Beach (VA) Ocean Lakes	Virginia
51.	Channing Ward	6-4/250	Aberdeen (MS) Aberdeen	Mississippi
53.	Leonard Williams	6-5/254	Daytona Beach (FL) Mainland	USC
56.	Jordan Jenkins	6-3/245	Hamilton (GA) Harris County	Georgia
61.	Arik Armstead	6-8/280	Elk Grove (CA) Pleasant Grove	Oregon
65.	Javonte Magee	6-5/262	San Antonio (TX) Sam Houston	Baylor
92.	Tyriq McCord	6-3/222	Tampa (FL) Jefferson	Miami (FL)
95.	Se'von Pittman	6-5/245	Canton (OH) McKinley	Ohio State
97.	Alex Balducci	6-4/262	Portland (OR) Central Catholic	Oregon
99.	Ifeadi Odenigbo	6-4/210	Centerville (OH) Centerville	Northwestern
DEFENSIVE TACKLES				
3.	Mario Edwards	6-4/275	Denton (TX) Ryan	Florida State
7.	Eddie Goldman	6-4/307	Washington (DC) Friendship Collegiate Academy	Florida State
14.	Ondre Pipkins	6-3/325	Kansas City (MO) Park Hill	Michigan
21.	Ellis McCarthy	6-5/311	Monrovia (CA) Monrovia	UCLA
26.	Malcom Brown	6-2/280	Brenham (TX) Brenham	Texas
64.	Tommy Schutt	6-2/301	Glen Ellyn (IL) Glenbard West	Ohio State
72.	Jonathan Taylor	6-4/315	Millen (GA) Jenkins County	Georgia
LINEBACKERS				
40.	Jabari Ruffin	6-4/230	Downey (CA) Downey	USC
43.	Reggie Ragland	6-4/245	Madison (AL) Bob Jones	Alabama
47.	Ukeme Eligwe	6-3/210	Stone Mountain (GA) Stone Mountain	Florida State
73.	Vince Biegel	6-3/210	Wisconsin Rapids (WI) Wisc Rapids Lincoln	Wisconsin
77.	Noor Davis	6-4/233	Leesburg (FL) Leesburg	Stanford
89.	Nick Dawson	6-3/228	Charlotte (NC) Phillip O Berry Acad Of Tech	Louisville
91.	Kwontie Moore	6-2/243	Norfolk (VA) Norfolk Christian School	Virginia
94.	Raphael Kirby	6-0/208	Stone Mountain (GA) Stephenson	Miami (FL)
98.	Ryan Anderson	6-3/250	Daphne (AL) Daphne	Alabama
DEFENSIVE BACKS				
4.	Shaq Thompson	6-2/210	Sacramento (CA) Grant	Washington
13.	Tracy Howard	5-11/175	Miramar (FL) Miramar	Miami (FL)
17.	Landon Collins	5-11/199	Geismar (LA) Dutchtown	Alabama
57.	Alex Carter	6-0/193	Ashburn (VA) Briar Woods	Stanford
60.	Travis Blanks	6-1/195	Tallahassee (FL) North Florida Christian	Clemson
68.	Ronald Darby	5-11/172	Oxon Hill (MD) Potomac	Florida State
69.	DeVante Harris	5-11/160	Mesquite (TX) Horn	Texas A&M
70.	Marcus Maye	6-1/195	Melbourne (FL) Holy Trinity	Florida
76.	Tee Shepard	6-1/180	Fresno (CA) Washington Union	Notre Dame
80.	Brian Poole	5-11/187	Bradenton (FL) Southeast	Florida
82.	Kevon Seymour	6-0/180	Pasadena (CA) Muir	USC
83.	Deon Bush	6-1/185	Miami (FL) Columbus	Miami (FL)
85.	Yuri Wright	6-2/180	Ramsey (NJ) Don Bosco Prep	Colorado
86.	LaDarrell McNeil	6-1/190	Dallas (TX) Wilmer-Hutchins	Tennessee
88.	Geno Smith	5-11/180	Atlanta (GA) St Pius X School	Alabama
ATHLETES				
24.	Eddie Williams	6-4/204	Panama City (FL) Arnold	Alabama
31.	Josh Harvey-Clemons	6-5/208	Valdosta (GA) Lowndes	Georgia
37.	Devin Fuller	6-0/185	Old Tappan (NJ) Old Tappan	UCLA
39.	Kendall Sanders	6-1/175	Athens (TX) Athens	Texas
71.	D.J. Foster	5-11/190	Scottsdale (AZ) Saguaro	Arizona State
79.	Cyrus Jones	5-11/183	Baltimore (MD) Gilman School	Alabama
84.	Joel Caleb	6-2/201	Midlothian (VA) Clover Hill	Virginia Tech

100 FOR 2013

HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS

TOP 100 PLAYERS BY POSITION

Rk.	Name	Ht./Wt.	Hometown/School

QUARTERBACKS

8.	Max Browne	6-5/202	Sammamish, WA/Skyline
11.	Tyrone Swoopes	6-5/220	Whitewright, TX/Whitewright
16.	Shane Morris	6-3/183	Warren, MI/De La Salle
47.	Ryan Burns	6-4/218	Ashburn, VA/Stone Bridge
71.	Troy Williams	6-0/173	Harbor City, CA/Narbonne
80.	Johnathon McCrary	6-3/180	Ellenwood, GA/Cedar Grove

RUNNING BACKS

9.	Thomas Tyner	6-0/200	Beaverton, OR/Aloha
18.	Ty Isaac	6-3/215	Joliet, IL/Joliet Catholic
20.	Altee Tenpenny	5-11/200	North Little Rock, AR/North Little Rock
23.	Greg Bryant	5-11/200	Delray Beach, FL/American Heritage School
48.	Justin Davis	6-1/195	Stockton, CA/Lincoln
64.	Derrick Green	6-0/215	Richmond, VA/Hermitage
74.	Kailo Moore	5-10/180	Rosedale, MS/West Bolivar
87.	Taquan Mizzell	5-10/180	Virginia Beach, VA/Bayside
90.	Ryan Green	5-10/195	State Petersburg, FL/Catholic

WIDE RECEIVERS

13.	Ricky Seals-Jones	6-5/220	Sealy, TX/Sealy
19.	Derrick Griffin	6-6/215	Rosenberg, TX/Terry
24.	Marquez North	6-3/205	Charlotte, NC/Mallard Creek
26.	Robert Foster	6-3/170	Monaca, PA/Central Valley
31.	Laquon Treadwell	6-3/183	Crete, IL/Crete Monee
45.	Stacy Coley	6-1/175	Oakland Park, FL/Northeast
52.	Steven Mitchell	5-11/170	Mission Hills, CA/Bishop Alemany
59.	Ahmad Fulwood	6-4/197	Jacksonville, FL/Bishop Kenny
61.	Jake Oliver	6-4/194	Dallas, TX/Jesuit
97.	Demarcus Robinson	6-2/200	Fort Valley, GA/Peach County

TIGHT ENDS

22.	Adam Breneman	6-5/220	Camp Hill, PA/Cedar Cliff
35.	O.J. Howard	6-6/226	Autauga, AL/Autauga Academy
55.	DeSean Smith	6-4/222	Lake Charles, LA/Barbe
96.	Jake Butt	6-6/230	Pickerington, OH/Pickerington North

OFFENSIVE LINEMEN

3.	Laremy Tunsil	6-6/275	Lake City, FL/Columbia
25.	Kent Perkins	6-5/300	Dallas, TX/Lake Highlands
27.	Ethan Pocic	6-7/285	Lemont, IL/Lemont
46.	Chris Fox	6-6/297	Parker, CO/Ponderosa
49.	Steve Elmer	6-6/305	Midland, MI/Midland
51.	Jake Raulerson	6-4/250	Celina, TX/Celina
54.	Patrick Kugler	6-5/280	Wexford, PA/North Allegheny
57.	Austin Golson	6-4/277	Prattville, AL/Prattville
60.	Kyle Bosch	6-5/285	Wheaton, IL/State Francis
67.	Reeve Koehler	6-3/280	Honolulu, HI/State Louis
83.	Evan Lisle	6-6/265	Centerville, OH/Centerville
92.	Darius James	6-5/319	Killeen, TX/Harker Heights
98.	Aaron Cochran	6-6/320	Atwater, CA/Buhach

DEFENSIVE ENDS

1.	Robert Nkemdiche	6-5/260	Loganville, GA/Grayson
6.	Kenny Bigelow	6-3/285	Elkton, MD/Eastern Christian Academy
14.	Joey Bosa	6-5/260	Fort Lauderdale, FL/St. Thomas Aquinas
21.	Eddie Vanderdoes	6-4/285	Placer, CA/Placer
42.	Dee Liner	6-2/274	Muscle Shoals, AL/Muscle Shoals
50.	Garrett Sickels	6-4/240	Little Silver, NJ/Red Bank Regional
73.	Isaac Rochell	6-5/260	McDonough, GA/Eagle's Landing Christian
76.	Jordan Sherit	6-4/245	Tampa, FL/Hillsborough
81.	Kylie Fitts	6-4/260	Redlands, CA/East Valley
91.	Carl Lawson	6-2/253	Alpharetta, GA/Milton
93.	Joe Mathis	6-4/254	Upland, CA/Upland
99.	D.J. Ward	6-4/240	Lawton, OK/Lawton
100.	Jonathan Allen	6-3/225	Ashburn, VA/Stone Bridge

DEFENSIVE TACKLES

33.	Montravius Adams	6-3/290	Vienna, GA/Dooly County
43.	Henry Poggi	6-3/250	Baltimore, MD/Gilman School
63.	Isaiah Golden	6-2/295	Carthage, TX/Carthage
69.	A'Shawn Robinson	6-4/302	Fort Worth, TX/Arlington Heights
70.	Michael Hill	6-3/315	Pendleton, SC/Pendleton
78.	Greg Webb	6-2/290	Sicklerville, NJ/Timber Creek
82.	Caleb Brantley	6-3/285	Crescent City, FL/Crescent City
85.	Jaynard Bostwick	6-4/291	Port State Lucie, FL/St. Lucie West Centennial
89.	Justin Manning	6-3/275	Dallas, TX/Kimball

LINEBACKERS

2.	Reuben Foster	6-2/228	Auburn, AL/Auburn
12.	Matthew Thomas	6-3/201	Miami, FL/Booker T. Washington
15.	E.J. Levenberry Jr.	6-3/226	Woodbridge, VA/C. D. Hylton
17.	Michael Hutchings	6-2/210	Concord, CA/De La Salle
34.	Jaylon Smith	6-3/202	Fort Wayne, IN/Bishop Luers
36.	Trey Johnson	6-1/220	Lawrenceville, GA/Central Gwinnett
37.	Dorian O'Daniel	6-1/205	Olney, MD/Our Lady Of Good Counsel
40.	Chans Cox	6-3/220	Lakeside, AZ/Blue Ridge
44.	Mike McCray	6-4/230	Trotwood, OH/Trotwood-Madison
53.	Daniel McMillian	6-3/220	Jacksonville, FL/First Coast
62.	Peter Kalambayi	6-3/229	Matthews, NC/Butler
68.	Doug Randolph	6-3/215	Richmond, VA/Woodberry Forest School
88.	Johnny O'Neal	6-2/225	Dublin, GA/West Laurens
95.	Larenz Bryant	6-1/203	Charlotte, NC/Vance

DEFENSIVE BACKS

4.	Kendall Fuller	6-0/185	Olney, MD/Our Lady Of Good Counsel
5.	Su'a Cravens	6-1/205	Murrieta, CA/Vista Murrieta
7.	Cameron Burrows	6-1/195	Trotwood, OH/Trotwood-Madison
10.	Vernon Hargreaves III	5-10/177	Tampa, FL/Wharton
28.	Eli Woodard	6-1/185	Voorhees, NJ/Eastern
30.	Max Redfield	6-2/195	Mission Viejo, CA/Mission Viejo
32.	Leon McQuay III	6-2/177	Seffner, FL/Armwood
38.	Antonio Conner	6-2/192	Batesville, MS/South Panola
39.	Marcell Harris	6-2/205	Orlando, FL/Dr. Phillips
56.	Mackensie Alexander	5-11/175	Immokalee, FL/Immokalee
58.	Dashon Hunt	5-10/175	Westlake Village, CA/Westlake
65.	Tray Matthews	6-1/190	Newnan, GA/Newnan
72.	Holland Fisher	6-2/205	Midlothian, VA/Manchester
77.	Dymonte Thomas	6-1/175	Alliance, OH/Marlington
79.	Will Likely	5-7/171	Belle Glade, FL/Glades Central
84.	Priest Willis	6-2/200	Tempe, AZ/Marcos De Niza
86.	Kameron Miles	6-2/200	Mesquite, TX/West Mesquite
94.	Nick Washington	6-0/180	Jacksonville, FL/Trinity Christian

ATHLETES

29.	Derrick Henry	6-3/241	Yulee, FL/Yulee
41.	Jalin Marshall	6-0/190	Middletown, OH/Middletown
66.	John Diarse	6-0/202	Monroe, LA/Neville
75.	ArDarius Stewart	6-3/190	Fultondale, AL/Fultondale

TOP 10 SCHOOLS BY POSITION

Quarterback

1. Florida State
2. Washington
3. Purdue
4. Notre Dame
5. Oregon
6. Cal
7. Southern Miss
8. BYU
9. Auburn
9. Cincinnati

Running back

1. Georgia
2. Alabama
3. Virginia Tech
4. Miami
5. Michigan
6. Ole Miss
7. Texas
8. Texas A&M
9. Ohio State
10. Cincinnati

Wide Receiver

1. Oklahoma
2. Tennessee
3. Miami
4. Maryland
5. Cal
6. USC
7. Texas Tech
8. UCLA
9. Texas A&M
10. South Carolina

Tight End

1. Florida
2. Oregon
3. Auburn
4. Oklahoma
5. Oregon State
5. TCU
7. USC
7. USF
9. Oklahoma State
10. Michigan

Offensive Line

1. Stanford
2. Auburn
3. USC
4. Michigan
5. Texas
6. Oregon State
7. Oklahoma
8. Ohio State
9. Florida
10. Rutgers

Defensive Tackle

1. Florida State
2. Texas
3. Alabama
4. Michigan
5. Florida
6. Clemson
7. UCLA
8. Mississippi State
8. Tennessee
10. Notre Dame

Defensive End

1. Florida
2. Ohio State
3. Oregon
4. Stanford
5. Georgia
6. Miami
7. Arkansas
8. Virginia
9. Mississippi State
9. USC

Linebacker

1. Alabama
2. Texas
3. LSU
4. Michigan
4. Virginia Tech
6. Ohio State
7. Louisville
8. Nebraska
9. USC
10. Florida State

Defensive Back

1. Miami
2. Alabama
3. Washington
4. Florida
5. Ohio State
6. Florida State
7. South Carolina
8. Notre Dame
9. USC
10. Virginia Tech

Athlete

1. Texas
2. Alabama
3. Georgia
4. UCLA
5. Georgia Tech
5. Mississippi State
7. Washington
8. Virginia Tech
9. Clemson
10. Virginia

Kicker

1. Florida State
1. Purdue
3. Duke
4. Alabama
4. Clemson
6. Georgia
6. TCU
8. Washington
9. South Carolina

SEC RECRUITING

By Keith Niebuhr
Rivals.com

Alabama

Overview: Alabama, which typically wins with defense, signed a group of defenders that rivals any in the country — especially at linebacker. There, the Tide landed four-star talents **Ryan Anderson**, **Denzel Devall**, **Tyler Hayes**, **Dillon Lee** and **Reggie Ragland**, each of whom brings a different skill-set to Tuscaloosa. Another key defensive signee was five-star safety **Landon Collins** of Louisiana, whom the Tide swiped away from LSU. On offense, Alabama scooped up five-star running back and one-time Auburn commit **T.J. Yeldon**, along with **Chris Black** and **Amari Cooper** — two of the best receivers in Florida. The feeing in Tuscaloosa is that Yeldon could contribute right away.

Headliner: Take your pick among Collins, athlete **Eddie Williams** and Yeldon. A strong case could be made for Yeldon, though, partly because of his immense talents, but also because he had been committed to archrival Auburn for several months before flipping to Alabama in a move that sent shockwaves through the state. Collins would be a close second though; he picked the Tide on national television over the wishes of his mother.

Sleeper: It's probably **Darren Lake**. A strong, athletic and explosive defensive tackle, he comes from rural Alabama, there isn't much film on him and he was overshadowed by many of the bigger-name Tide signees.

Bottom Line: In a nutshell, the Tide cleaned up. Again. Right now, Alabama is rolling both on the field and on the recruiting trail. To high school prospects, there are few schools that get them as excited as the Tide, and no coach has the star power of Nick Saban.

Florida

Overview: The Gators missed on a couple big fish late, yet still finished with an elite class. That group included the country's No. 1 offensive lineman, tackle **D.J. Humphries** of North Carolina, who should be able to contribute early in Gainesville. Florida grabbed another five-star prospect from the Tar Heel state — strongside defensive end **Jonathan Bullard**. The Gators also pulled off a signing day shocker when they flipped longtime five-star Florida State commit **Dante Fowler Jr.**, an outstanding weakside defensive end/outside linebacker, away from the Seminoles. Will Muschamp's team came up with a few more impressive players on the interior as well, including junior college defensive tackle **Damien Jacobs** and four-star tight ends **Kent Taylor** and **Colin Thompson**.

Headliner: It has to be Humphries, who, because of his talents and Florida's great need for depth and production at offensive tackle, was a great help to Muschamp and Co. It wouldn't be surprising if he's a key contributor or even possibly a starter in 2012.

Sleeper: Safety **Rhaheim Ledbetter** would be a good choice. In a star-studded class, he got little press — and much of it came because he was Bullard's high school teammate. But Ledbetter is a talented, physical safety who has the potential to eventually become a major contributor in Gainesville.

Bottom Line: Florida did very well in Muschamp's first full recruiting cycle, especially in North Carolina. Overall, the Gators have to be happy, yet they did come up short at receiver, a key need area.

Auburn

Overview: Auburn started the recruiting season strong, slumped a bit and then finished with a bang. Two late additions to the offensive line were big-time gets. One of them, Rivals100 offensive tackle **Avery Young**, chose Auburn at the 11th hour. The other, four-star tackle **Alex Kozan**, didn't pick Auburn until a few weeks after signing day. All told, the Tigers grabbed an impressive 13 four-star prospects. Besides the offensive line, Auburn also came up big at receiver with the signings of four-star talents **Ricardo Louis** and **JaQuay Williams**, the latter of whom might have the highest upside of any Tigers signee. Quarterback **Zeke Pike** is another player with a lot of tools.

Headliner: Young was a major pickup for the Tigers and is the highest-ranked member of the group. The 6-6, 273-pounder made Auburn sweat it out. Both Florida and Georgia thought he would be part of their classes up until the last minute. Auburn did great up front, and Young's addition is a large part of that success.

Sleeper: Tight end **Darrion Hutcherson** has all the tools to become a solid starter in the SEC. He's in the 6-7 range and has a terrific physique. Also keep an eye on offensive tackle **Will Adams**, whom Auburn convinced to flip from Georgia Tech very late.

Bottom Line: Auburn didn't seem to get the bump off winning the national championship that often is common, but the Tigers nonetheless signed an outstanding group. Losing five-star running back T.J. Yeldon to Alabama stung, yet Auburn cleaned up at many need positions.

Georgia

Overview: As it seems to do every year, Georgia put together a very nice class. This one was led by five-star talents **John Theus**, an offensive tackle from Florida, and **Josh Harvey-Clemons**, who also strongly considered Florida and Florida State. To say the least, the Bulldogs also made a killing at running back with the additions of four-star prospects **Todd Gurley**, a big, powerful and fast player, and **Keith Marshall**, who has exceptional speed, from North Carolina. On defense, massive tackle **Jonathan Taylor** and cornerback **Sheldon Dawson** were two excellent pickups. Ditto for four-star end/linebacker **Jordan Jenkins**, another Rivals100 recruit.

Headliner: Theus, a U.S. Army All-American, helped guide his high school team to a state championship, and was the lead blocker for a pair of 1,000-yard rushers. The feeling in Athens is that he should contribute right away.

TOP 20 INCOMING SEC RECRUITS

Rk.	Player	Ht./Wt.	Pos.	Hometown/School	College
1.	Dorial Green-Beckham	6-6/220	WR	Springfield (Mo.) Hillcrest	Missouri
2.	D.J. Humphries	6-5/265	OT	Charlotte (N.C.) Mallard Creek	Florida
3.	Jonathan Bullard	6-4/255	DE	Shelby (N.C.) Crest	Florida
4.	T.J. Yeldon	6-2/205	RB	Daphne (Ala.) High	Alabama
5.	Trey Williams	5-8/175	RB	Spring (Texas) Dekaney	Texas A&M
6.	Landon Collins	5-11/199	S	Geismar (La.) Dutchtown	Alabama
7.	John Theus	6-6/292	OT	Jacksonville (Fla.) Bolles	Georgia
8.	Eddie Williams	6-4/202	ATH	Panama City (Fla.) Arnold	Alabama
9.	Dante Fowler Jr.	6-3/232	DE	St. Petersburg (Fla.) Lakewood	Florida
10.	Josh Harvey-Clemons	6-5/208	ATH	Valdosta (Ga.) Lowndes	Georgia
11.	Thomas Johnson	6-0/180	WR	Dallas (Texas) Skyline	Texas A&M
12.	Todd Gurley	6-1/195	RB	Tarboro (N.C.) High	Georgia
13.	Reggie Ragland	6-4/245	LB	Madison (Ala.) Bob Jones	Alabama
14.	Amari Cooper	6-1/175	WR	Miami (Fla.) Northwestern	Alabama
15.	Keith Marshall	5-11/190	RB	Raleigh (N.C.) Millbrook	Georgia
16.	Channing Ward	6-4/250	DE	Aberdeen (Miss.) High	Ole Miss
17.	Kent Taylor	6-5/220	TE	Land O' Lakes (Fla.) High	Florida
18.	Jordan Jenkins	6-3/245	DE	Hamilton (Ga.) Harris County	Georgia
19.	Chris Black	5-11/170	WR	Jacksonville (Fla.) First Coast	Alabama
20.	Denico Autry	6-6/245	DE	Scooba (Miss.) East Mississippi C.C.	Mississippi St.

Harvey-Clemons also was a solid pickup, but he may need a little time to develop physically to play outside linebacker in the SEC. He also, however, could see time at safety or receiver.

Sleeper: It wouldn't be a shock to see Dawson become a multi-year starter in Athens. At this point, he's just a little raw, but there is no denying he is among the most athletic members of this Georgia class. Dawson could make an immediate impact on special teams because of his outstanding return abilities.

Bottom Line: Another year, another strong haul for Mark Richt's program on the recruiting trail. Georgia not only did very well on the interior, but landed several key talented skill players, notably Gurley and Marshall.

Texas A&M

Overview: Kevin Sumlin's first class in College Station ranked in the top half of the ultra-competitive SEC, which was no small feat. Five-star running back signee **Trey Williams**, who rushed for nearly 4,000 yards as a senior, was the prized signee. Williams highlights a very talented group of skill players. Strong-armed quarterback **Matt Davis** was a four-star recruit. So was receiver **Thomas Johnson**, the country's No. 34 overall prospect. The Aggies also signed Rivals250 center **Mike Matthews**, who ranks No. 1 at his position. Defensively, A&M's class is led by cornerback **DeVante Harris**, the leading tackler in the Under Armour All-America Game.

Headliner: Easy, it's Williams. A dynamic back that is an explosive home run threat, he's the No. 3 prospect nationally at his position, and chose the Aggies over offers from many of the country's best programs. Although Williams isn't very big, he's extremely well-built, so his size doesn't appear to be a major issue.

Sleeper: **Julien Obioha** is a big, athletic and quick defensive end prospect with a nice upside. The Louisiana native flew under the radar a bit despite having well over a dozen offers.

Bottom Line: All in all, Sumlin and his staff have to feel pleased with the group headed to Texas A&M. In a limited amount of time, the Aggies landed a lot of quality talent. And many of these signees could see significant playing time in the fall. This is a good class with which to enter the rugged SEC.

Tennessee

Overview: Although the Volunteers had two outstanding linebacker commits flip late to other programs, they still put together a strong group that features 10 four-star players. Rivals100 safety **LaDarrell McNeil**, a long and lean defender with great overall athleticism, is the centerpiece of the class. However, one could argue Tennessee did its best work on offense, where it landed four-star quarterback **Nathan Peterman** from Florida, electric junior college receiver **Cordarrelle Patterson** and three other four-star receivers — **Drae Bowles**, **Jason Croom** and **Alton Howard**. Few would be surprised if Peterman eventually becomes the jewel of this class. Running back **Davante Bourque** gives Tennessee a big, physical runner, and will be another solid addition to the offense.

Headliner: It has to be McNeil, whom the Volunteers went into the heart of Texas to land. A top-10 player nationally at his position, he's a terrific addition to the Tennessee secondary and a big-time talent on the back end. He has good size and speed, and covers a ton of ground. Patterson may be a close second, and he should play immediately.

Sleeper: Running back **Quenshaun Watson**. A late discovery by the Vols from Georgia, Watson isn't very big but has game-breaking speed, which is one thing Tennessee has lacked a bit in the backfield of late. Watson also could be utilized in the passing game because of his abilities in space, where he is especially dangerous.

Bottom Line: Coming off a down season, and despite high turnover on the staff, the Vols rebounded with a class that has several quality players. This group even possesses a few potential difference-makers.

LSU

Overview: It might not have been the top-10 class we've become accustomed to seeing from Les Miles' Tigers, but it still was pretty good. And most programs would gladly take it. Four-star cornerback **Dwayne Thomas** highlights a group with nine four-star prospects. On offense, the Tigers landed two massive tackles in **Vadal Alexander** and **Derek Edinburgh**, a pair of players that have excellent long-term potential and had big-time offer lists. LSU also got standout receivers in **Travin Dural** and **Avery Johnson**, the latter being the younger brother of former Tigers star Patrick Peterson. Defensively, four-star outside linebackers **Kwon Alexander** and **Lorenzo Phillips**, a one-time Florida commit, were key additions. Ditto for **Lamar Louis**, who also will play linebacker in Baton Rouge, but could see time at running back if needed.

Headliner: Thomas, a Rivals250 recruit, has excellent height and length and is extremely athletic. His 6-1 frame could help neutralize opposing SEC receivers, who seem to be getting bigger and bigger each season.

Sleeper: Quarterback **Jeremy Liggins**, whom the Tigers plucked out of Oxford, Miss., has the physical tools to succeed, but he must keep his weight in check. If for some reason it doesn't work out for the big-bodied Liggins at QB, he is talented enough athletically to transition to either defensive end or tight end.

Bottom Line: If this is a "bad" LSU class, then things must be very good in Baton Rouge. Despite missing out on a few big names (see Landon Collins), LSU has nothing to be ashamed off. This group can help the Tigers win a lot of games.

South Carolina

Overview: On the heels of another successful season in Columbia, Steve Spurrier's Gamecocks hauled in a class of 25 that included numerous quality recruits. One of them was running back **Mike Davis** from the Atlanta area, a player that at one time was committed to the Ball Coach's former team — Florida. The South Carolina offense also added four-star prospects in receiver **Shaq Roland** and offense linemen **Joe Harris** and **Brock Stadnik**. On defense, four-star safeties **Jordan Diggs** and **Chaz Elder** and defensive end **Darius English**, a 6-6 prospect with a ton of upside, were among the team's most important signees. The Gamecocks did extremely well in neighboring Georgia, landing almost half their class from there.

Headliner: Davis gets the nod because (1) He's immensely talented and (2) He could be asked to contribute early. Davis isn't a burner, but rather a patient, shifty and powerful back. He truly has great vision, and exceptional one-cut ability. He also runs with very good balance and knows how to block, and should be able to provide the Gamecocks with some depth at a key position.

Sleeper: Cornerback **Rico McWilliams**. A three-star player in the secondary, McWilliams is a wiry defender who is quick and surprisingly strong and physical given his frame. He also has an excellent feel for the game.

Bottom Line: For Spurrier and Co., this was another good crop. It may have lacked the star power of the program's two previous classes, but from top to bottom, there is much for South Carolina supporters to like.

Vanderbilt

Overview: Under James Franklin, the Commodores put together their best class in recent memory — and maybe of the last quarter-century. All-purpose back **Brian Kimbrow** of Memphis, the team's most well-known signee, is a speedy player who gives the Commodores a home run threat on offense and someone who also could make an impact on special teams. Offensive lineman **Andrew Jelks** and defensive end **Caleb Azubike** also were major additions as four-star prospects from the Volunteer State. The Commodores did especially well on the offensive line, where players such as **Andrew Jelks**, a four-star in-state product, **Adam Butler**, **Barrett Gouger**, **Will Holden** and **Kevin McCoy** should help the program bolster its play on the interior.

Headliner: Kimbrow is the choice. The highest-rated player in the Vanderbilt class, his commitment helped give the Commodores a ton of momentum on the recruiting trail and made other prospects take notice of the program. Kimbrow isn't very big, but is a determined competitor with a ton of heart and the strong desire to put this program on the map.

Sleeper: A player to keep an eye on might be **Darreon Herring**. He's a long and lean outside linebacker who plays the game at a high speed and is highly intelligent. Herring was a bit light in high school, but has an excellent frame. If he can bulk up, he has the ability to contribute this season.

Bottom Line: This class generated a lot of buzz for Franklin and Co. It will bring a bunch of players to Nashville with the potential to contribute early.

Mississippi State

Overview: Mississippi State's class isn't flashy, but the Bulldogs no doubt are more than a little happy with what they landed. On defense, it appears Dan Mullen's program signed several potential difference-makers. Defensive tackle **Quay Evans** is a powerful, speedy and aggressive tackle. Another tackle, **Nick James**, has similar skills. Junior college defensive end signee **Denico Autry**, who, like Evans, is a four-star recruit, also should contribute early. End **A.J. Jefferson** is another solid signee up front. He's a long and rangy player with arguably the best frame of anybody in this class. At linebacker, Mississippi State closed extremely strong, landing four-star inside backer **Richie Brown** and three-star prospect **Beniquez Brown**, who will man the outside. Richie Brown is deceptively fast, and was a tackling machine throughout his high school career. On the defensive back end, cornerback/safety signee **Will Redmond** arguably was the most coveted player in Tennessee. Among offensive recruits, center **Devon Desper**, an Under Armour All-American, stands out.

Headliner: Evans. An early enrollee, he has the ability to become an all-conference type of player. He's raw, but nobody doubts he has immense talent.

Sleeper: Cornerback **Cedric Jiles** is a player that generated little buzz outside of the Magnolia State, but is a slick defensive back with a good combination of speed and size. He really could play just about anywhere in the secondary.

Bottom Line: Mississippi State's class features a nice collection of talent, but the Bulldogs did an especially good job on the interior. They also have to be thrilled with their take of top in-state talent.

Missouri

Overview: The Tigers enter the SEC with a class that includes the nation's No. 1 recruit, receiver **Dorial Green-Beckham**, a player who most expect to contribute from Day 1. Quarterback signee **Maty Mauk**, a three-star player from Ohio, might have been the person happiest with Green-Beckham's signing. Those two are players the Tigers can build an offense around in the coming years. The offense also landed four-star guard **Evan Boehm**, an Under Armour All-American with a fairly high ceiling. Additionally, Missouri feels like it has a couple of good ones at running back in **Russell Hansbrough** and **Morgan Steward**. The Tigers' defensive class is highlighted by the signing of linebacker **Donavin Newsom**. In-state product **Michael Scherer**, a 6-4, outside linebacker, is another player to watch.

Headliner: The importance of landing Green-Beckham can't be overstated. For starters, it gave the program terrific PR on national signing day. More importantly, he's truly an elite player who will be a matchup nightmare in the SEC because of his combination of size and overall athleticism. He could be deadly in the red zone.

Sleeper: Tight end **Sean Culkin** comes from a small school in Florida, but has big-time ability. The 6-5, 226-pounder does a lot of things well.

Bottom Line: All told, 18 of Missouri's 19 signees garnered three or more stars. On the flipside, only two earned four or more. While this is a solid class, solid sometimes isn't enough in the SEC. Green-Beckham, though, is a special talent who would boost any class.

Arkansas

Overview: At one time, Dorial Green-Beckham, the country's No. 1 overall recruit, looked as if he were headed to Arkansas. While that ultimately didn't happen, the Razorbacks class nonetheless isn't one to overlook even though it's not in the top half of the SEC rankings. At receiver, they still did pretty well for themselves, with the biggest catch being **D'Arthur Cowan**, a tall and lanky target who can go high into the air and has a knack for making spectacular receptions. **Keon Hatcher** is another solid pickup at receiver. Offensively, running back **Jonathan Williams**, a Rivals250 prospect, was the top signee. On defense, **Otha Peters**, a speedy, physical inside linebacker, was a significant get — but so were guys such as defensive linemen **Darius Philon** and **JaMichael Winston**, a pair of high school teammates from Alabama who are excellent pass-rushers. Philon had been committed to Alabama.

Headliner: Peters has the ability to compete for early playing time in Fayetteville. A late flip from Tennessee, he is one of the most physically impressive SEC signees and is a true sideline-to-sideline guy.

Sleeper: Defensive end **Brandon Lewis** has an outstanding frame; once he grows into it, he looks like someone capable of making an impact on the line.

Bottom Line: Missing out on a player with Green-Beckham's talents couldn't have sat well, especially considering how much he probably would have been utilized by the Arkansas offense. That said, the Razorbacks still signed plenty of talent.

Ole Miss

Overview: The first class for new coach Hugh Freeze included the Magnolia State's top prospect, stud defensive end **Channing Ward**, who has the potential to be a difference-maker in Oxford because he not only possesses good size, but great quickness and explosiveness. The defense also picked up tackle **Issac Gross**, a player who is slightly undersized, but performed at a high level in the Under Armour All-America Game. In the secondary, safety **Trae Elston** and cornerback **Anthony Standifer** were two of the Rebels' better signees. On offense, they did well at running back and quarterback. Junior college signal-caller **Bo Wallace** is a good one, while tailbacks **I'Tavius Mathers** and **Jaylen Walton** provide Ole Miss with two terrific talents. Mathers is more of the every-down back. Walton is a shifty runner with very good speed who might also be used in the return game.

Headliner: Without question Ward was the marquee signee for the Ole Miss staff, which got a late start because of the coaching change with the Rebels. He chose Ole Miss over schools such as Alabama, Auburn and Mississippi State.

Sleeper: **Mike Hilton** of Georgia could play cornerback or possibly be an all-purpose back for the Rebels. He has the skills to become a fine player at either spot, even though he isn't very big. Most likely, he will end up on defense.

Bottom Line: Freeze and Co., had little time to put together this class, yet managed to hold onto some important prospects committed to the previous regime and bring some solid new ones aboard.

Kentucky

Overview: Even though the class doesn't rank highly, it isn't lacking in talent. Four-star quarterback **Patrick Towles** is a high-end prospect with excellent tools and a big body. He also comes from a winning program, which shouldn't be overlooked. Kentucky landed two of its top signees on defense. One of them, safety **Zack Blaylock**, is a ball-hawking defender who recorded double-digit interceptions in 2011 and returned more than half of them for touchdowns. Another is defensive tackle **Thomas Chapman**, who brings good size, strength and quickness to the Kentucky defensive interior. Outside linebacker **Khalid Henderson**, a former Vols commit with nice speed, is another to watch. Ditto for defensive back prospect **Fred Tiller**. The offense snagged running back **Justin Taylor** at the 11th hour, and also landed **Jalen Whitlow**, a true athlete capable of playing multiple positions, including receiver.

Headliner: Towles was the top prospect in Kentucky, and is a player around which the program can be built. How quickly will he hit the field? You never know with quarterbacks, but his long-term potential is up there.

Sleeper: Receiver **DeMarcus Sweat**, one of eight signees from the Peach State, has a terrific frame, but needs to work on his consistency catching the ball. As he improves in that area, his career could take off.

Bottom Line: The SEC may be the only conference in the country where the team with the last-ranked recruiting class actually did a pretty decent job. How Towles ultimately does will determine how good this class really is.

TOP to BOTTOM

1. LSU
2. Alabama
3. Georgia
4. Arkansas
5. South Carolina
6. Florida
7. Texas A&M
8. Missouri
9. Auburn
10. Tennessee
11. Mississippi State
12. Vanderbilt
13. Ole Miss
14. Kentucky

Same Teams at the Top, Even After Expansion

Georgia coach Mark Richt entered last season with his job apparently in jeopardy. The hot seat was warmed by an 0-2 start. But then the Bulldogs reeled off 10 consecutive wins to capture the Eastern Division and play for the SEC championship.

Richt's status now seems secure, and even though offseason suspensions have damaged the Bulldogs' secondary, Georgia is the team to beat in the East, thanks to a prolific quarterback, solid skill position players and nine starters returning from the nation's fifth-ranked defense.

South Carolina, coming off a school-record 11-win season, will challenge Georgia for East supremacy. Florida, a mere 13-11 in the past two years, should have a great defense ... but a suspect offense keeps the Gators out of the East's winner's circle.

The West had teams ranked 1-2-3 in the AP poll late last season before Alabama defeated LSU to win the national title and Arkansas won the Cotton Bowl.

LSU figures to prevail again in the West thanks to a powerful running game and improved quarterback play. Alabama returns only four defensive starters — fewest in the SEC — from the nation's best defense.

Arkansas appeared ready to contend again in the West, but the ouster of play-calling genius Bobby Petrino could cause a setback.

Newcomers Missouri (East) and Texas A&M (West) likely will finish no better than fourth in their respective divisions.

EAST DIVISION

Georgia's Aaron Murray has had consecutive 3,000-yard passing seasons, and he has a talented receiving corps, led by Malcolm Mitchell, who caught 45 passes but spent most of his spring at cornerback. The run game should be solid. In the second year of defensive coordinator Todd Grantham's 3-4 scheme, Georgia allowed only 277.2 yards per game.

Steve Spurrier did a masterful job milking 11 wins out of a South Carolina team that changed quarterbacks at midseason and lost talented running back Marcus Lattimore in October. The mobile Connor Shaw picked up the slack as he ranked third in the SEC in pass efficiency. The defensive line is outstanding.

Florida will be stifling on defense, but new offensive coordinator Brent Pease (who replaced Charlie Weis) must coax production out of unproven quarterbacks Jeff Driskel and Jacoby Brissett.

Southeastern Conference Picks

SEC EAST	Good news	Bad news	Our call
1. Georgia	QB Aaron Murray had school-record 35 TD passes; 3-4 defense was terrific.	Early suspensions have secondary in a quandary; Dawgs lost three OL starters.	Dawgs project to win East again behind high-scoring offense, stout defense.
2. South Carolina	RB Marcus Lattimore returns; QB Connor Shaw proved solid; DL is outstanding.	Lost WR Alshon Jeffery, CB Stephon Gilmore to pros, DC Ellis Johnson to Southern Miss.	SC has beaten Georgia and Florida the past two years, but the defense will take a step back.
3. Florida	Ten starters return from a stout defense; team morale should be better.	Unproven head coach and QB; not blessed with skilled receivers or a power runner.	Gators will be better, but lack of offense keeps them from contending this year.
4. Missouri	QB James Franklin (3,846 total yards) is dynamic; spread-option is exciting.	RB Henry Josey (1,168 yards) might be out for season; defense will be tested.	Will be competitive, but Tigers find jump from Big 12 to SEC a bit shocking.
5. Tennessee	Offense should rank among three best in SEC; defense has assembled some talent.	Run game remains unproven; switch from 4-3 to 3-4 defense could take time.	After worst-ever 1-7 SEC record, Vols should rebound to win 7-8 games.
6. Vanderbilt	Solid QB-RB-WR combination; improved recruiting; new positive attitude.	Lost three best players on defense, and pass offense ranked eighth in the SEC.	Another bowl is possible but, despite improvement, team was only 2-6 in SEC play.
7. Kentucky	QB Max Smith, RB CoShik Williams provided spark; beat UT for first time since 1984.	Offense was last in SEC in most major categories; lost two best defenders.	Had five-year bowl streak snapped; another bowl appears unlikely due to poor offense.
SEC WEST			
1. LSU	Should be better passing team; very good run game; defense outstanding again.	Lost WR Rueben Randle, CB Mo Claiborne, DT Michael Brockers early to NFL.	If QB plays well, LSU has the ingredient it needs to win the national championship.
2. Alabama	Nick Saban has stockpiled talent at Alabama; QB AJ McCarron returns.	Lost three players early to NFL Draft; only four defensive starters return.	Tide could challenge for third national title in four years, but LSU stands in the way.
3. Arkansas	QB Tyler Wilson, RB Knile Davis great 1-2 punch; won 19 home games past three years.	Lost coach Bobby Petrino's play-calling ability; defense might not be title-worthy.	Even without Petrino, Hogs have enough ability to win 10 again ... but maybe not the West.
4. Texas A&M	Return 14 starters, nine on offense; new coach Kevin Sumlin has great offensive mind.	Blew five leads en route to 7-6 season; QB Ryan Tannehill graduated; defense shaky.	If Aggies don't fold in second half, they could win eight; will be challenged by SEC defenses.
5. Auburn	Return 8 defensive starters for new coordinator Brian VanGorder; good at RB.	Lost OC Gus Malzahn and 1,000-yard rusher Mike Dyer; QB play uncertain.	Could go 8-5 again, but not talented enough to compete with LSU, Alabama in West.
6. Miss. State	QB Tyler Russell had solid spring; five OL starters return along with three wideouts.	Lost outstanding RB in Vick Ballard; DT Fletcher Cox turned pro early.	If Russell has a good year, Bulldogs could challenge for Top 25 ranking.
7. Ole Miss	15 starters return, nine on offense; new coach Hugh Freeze brings fresh approach.	QB position a concern after Randall Mackey moved to WR; OL lost both tackles.	Rebels are 1-15 in SEC the past two years, and the outlook isn't much better this year. Patience.

Missouri brings a wide-open spread-option into the defensive-minded SEC.

WEST DIVISION

LSU's sensational season was marred by a 21-0 loss to Alabama in the BCS national championship game. But Zach Mettenberger, a former Georgia quarterback, should add spark to a pedestrian passing game, and the Tigers have a menacing defense.

Alabama's second national title in three years was forged by a strong running game, efficient quarterback play and a tenacious defense. Despite losing Heisman Trophy finalist Trent Richardson, the offense should again be sound. But the defense was impacted by graduation and early NFL departures.

Arkansas is hoping to win its first conference title since 1989 (Southwest Conference) behind quarterback Tyler Wilson, tailback Knile Davis and an array of good receivers. But with Petrino gone, can the offense be as dynamic?

Texas A&M has a veteran squad, minus the quarterback, from a 7-6 team that tied for sixth in the Big 12.

— Jimmy Hyams

Most Valuable Player

Tyrann Mathieu
DB, LSU

Offensive Player of the Year

Tyler Wilson
QB, Arkansas

Defensive Player of the Year

Jarvis Jones
LB, Georgia

Newcomer of the Year

Dorial Green-Beckham
WR, Missouri

HONOR ROLL

Most accurate passer	Tyler Wilson	Arkansas
Strongest arm	Tyler Bray	Tennessee
Best scrambler	James Franklin	Missouri
Coolest in the clutch	AJ McCarron	Alabama
Toughest to bring down	Marcus Lattimore	South Carolina
Best hands	Ryan Swope	Texas A&M
Most dangerous deep threat	Justin Hunter	Tennessee
Best pass blocker	Luke Joeckel	Texas A&M
Best run blocker	Alex Hurst	LSU
Best cover corner	Johnthan Banks	Mississippi State
Best pass rusher	Jarvis Jones	Georgia
Special teams demon	Chris Johnson	Florida

Lindy's 2012 ALL-SEC Team

OFFENSE - FIRST TEAM

QB	Tyler Wilson	Sr.	Arkansas
RB	Marcus Lattimore	Jr.	South Carolina
RB	Knile Davis	Sr.	Arkansas
WR	Justin Hunter	Jr.	Tennessee
WR	Cobi Hamilton	Sr.	Arkansas
TE	Philip Lutzenkirchen	Sr.	Auburn
C	Barrett Jones	Sr.	Alabama
OL	Alvin Bailey	Jr.	Arkansas
OL	Alex Hurst	Sr.	LSU
OL	Luke Joeckel	Jr.	Texas A&M
OL	Chance Warmack	Sr.	Alabama
AP	Andre Debose	Jr.	Florida
K	Caleb Sturgis	Sr.	Florida

OFFENSE - SECOND TEAM

QB	Aaron Murray	Jr.	Georgia
RB	Eddie Lacy	Jr.	Alabama
RB	Zac Stacy	Sr.	Vanderbilt
WR	Da'Rick Rogers	Jr.	Tennessee
WR	Malcolm Mitchell	So.	Georgia
TE	Chris Gragg	Sr.	Arkansas
C	Travis Swanson	Jr.	Arkansas
OL	D.J. Fluker	Jr.	Alabama
OL	Ja'Wuan James	Jr.	Tennessee
OL	Larry Warford	Sr.	Kentucky
OL	Chris Faulk	Jr.	LSU
AP	Dennis Johnson	Sr.	Arkansas
K	Drew Alleman	Sr.	LSU

OFFENSE - THIRD TEAM

QB	Tyler Bray	Jr.	Tennessee
RB	Isaiah Crowell	So.	Georgia
RB	Christine Michael	Sr.	Texas A&M
WR	Tavarres King	Sr.	Georgia
WR	Ryan Swope	Sr.	Texas A&M
TE	Mychal Rivera	Sr.	Tennessee
C	T.J. Johnson	Sr.	South Carolina
OL	Jake Matthews	Jr.	Texas A&M
OL	Dallas Thomas	Sr.	Tennessee
OL	Chris Burnette	Jr.	Georgia
OL	Matt Patchan	Sr.	Florida
AP	Dustin Harris	Sr.	Texas A&M
K	Zach Hocker	Jr.	Arkansas

DEFENSE - FIRST TEAM

DL	Sam Montgomery	Jr.	LSU
DL	Jadeveon Clowney	So.	South Carolina
DL	Barkevious Mingo	Jr.	LSU
DL	John Jenkins	Sr.	Georgia
LB	Jarvis Jones	Jr.	Georgia
LB	C.J. Mosley	Jr.	Alabama
LB	Jelani Jenkins	Jr.	Florida
DB	Tyrann Mathieu	Jr.	LSU
DB	Eric Reid	Jr.	LSU
DB	Robert Lester	Sr.	Alabama
DB	Johnthan Banks	Sr.	Mississippi State
P	Brad Wing	So.	LSU

DEFENSE - SECOND TEAM

DL	Devin Taylor	Sr.	South Carolina
DL	Sharrif Floyd	Jr.	Florida
DL	Abry Jones	Sr.	Georgia
DL	Corey Lemonier	Jr.	Auburn
LB	A.J. Johnson	So.	Tennessee
LB	Alec Ogletree	Jr.	Georgia
LB	Sean Porter	Sr.	Texas A&M
DB	Bacarri Rambo	Sr.	Georgia
DB	E.J. Gaines	Jr.	Missouri
DB	D.J. Swearinger	Sr.	South Carolina
DB	Matt Elam	Jr.	Florida
P	Dylan Breeding	Sr.	Arkansas

DEFENSE - THIRD TEAM

DL	Damontre Moore	Jr.	Texas A&M
DL	Jesse Williams	Sr.	Alabama
DL	Bennie Logan	Jr.	LSU
DL	Brad Madison	Sr.	Missouri
LB	Nico Johnson	Sr.	Alabama
LB	Jonathan Stewart	Sr.	Texas A&M
LB	Alonzo Highsmith	Sr.	Arkansas
DB	Tharold Simon	Jr.	LSU
DB	Branden Smith	Sr.	Georgia
DB	Eric Bennett	Jr.	Arkansas
DB	Dee Milliner	Jr.	Alabama
P	Tyler Campbell	Jr.	Ole Miss

THE **BIG** ONES

Sept. 1	
Alabama vs. Michigan (Arlington, TX)	Football powers meet for only the fourth time.
Sept. 8	
Florida at Texas A&M	Aggies' first-ever SEC game comes against former Texas D-coordinator.
Georgia at Missouri	Tigers make SEC debut vs. East champs in teams' second meeting ever.
Sept. 15	
Alabama at Arkansas	Hogs' aerial attack could challenge Tide's mighty defense.
Florida at Tennessee	Winner takes big step in right direction; loser continues to reel.
Sept. 22	
LSU at Auburn	This game has often determined which team contends in West.
Sept. 29	
Arkansas at Texas A&M	Former SWC rivals met the past three years in Arlington (Hogs 3-0).
Oct. 6	
LSU at Florida	LSU has won three of its past five games in The Swamp.
Georgia at South Carolina	Winner has upper hand in East race; Gamecocks have won past two.
Oct. 13	
Alabama at Missouri	Missouri leads series 2-1, last time teams met was 1978.
South Carolina at LSU	Steve Spurrier had his way vs. LSU in the '90s, but not lately.
Oct. 20	
Alabama at Tennessee	Tide has turned once-great rivalry into a rout, winning five straight.
South Carolina at Florida	Always intrigue when Spurrier faces his alma mater. He's won the past two.
LSU at Texas A&M	First regular-season contest in 17 years; Aggies won five in a row ('91-95).
Oct. 27	
Florida vs. Georgia (Jacksonville)	Gators are 18-4 since 1990 in SEC's only neutral-site game.
Nov. 3	
Alabama at LSU	SEC's two premier powers; Tigers are 9-4 vs. Tide since 2000.
Missouri at Florida	Tigers get a taste of what it's like in hostile SEC environment.
Nov. 10	
Texas A&M at Alabama	Bama is 3-1 vs. A&M; three former Tide coaches also led the Aggies.
Arkansas at South Carolina	If chips fall right, this could play role in who wins East & West.
Georgia at Auburn	Oldest rivalry in the South; Dawgs have won five of last six.
Nov. 24	
Auburn at Alabama	Iron Bowl features teams that have won past three national titles.
LSU at Arkansas	Border rivals play for The Boot; Hogs have won two in a row at home.
Missouri at Texas A&M	Former Big 12 members face each other for first time as SEC teams.
South Carolina at Clemson	Gamecocks have whipped instate rival three years in a row.
Florida at FSU	Gators have lost two in a row after beating Seminoles six straight years.

AARON MURRAY

Photo by Michael Wade

BOWL CONNECTIONS

SEC Champ
BCS (national title game if ranked #1 or #2, otherwise Sugar)

SEC #2	Capital One vs. Big Ten
SEC #3-4	Outback vs. Big Ten
SEC #3-4	Cotton vs. Big 12
SEC #5-6	Chick-Fil-A vs. ACC
SEC #5-6	Gator Bowl vs. Big Ten
SEC #7-8	Music City vs. ACC
SEC #7-9	Liberty vs. Conference USA
SEC #7-9	BBVA Compass Bowl vs. Big East

TOP 10 NFL TALENT

1. Tyler Wilson	QB	Arkansas	Sr.	Has size, arm, smarts, accuracy.
2. Marcus Lattimore	RB	South Carolina	Jr.	Combines balance, power, speed.
3. Jarvis Jones	LB	Georgia	Jr.	Great athlete, edge pass rusher.
4. Justin Hunter	WR	Tennessee	Jr.	Wonderful hands and leaping ability.
5. Knile Davis	RB	Arkansas	Jr.	Had 1,322 yards in 2010; great balance.
6. Barkevious Mingo	DE	LSU	Jr.	Big-time pass rusher; runs a 4.4 40.
7. John Jenkins	NT	Georgia	Sr.	350-pounder was unblockable in spring.
8. Devin Taylor	DE	South Carolina	Sr.	Outstanding pass rusher with great first step.
9. Eric Reid	DB	LSU	Jr.	Excellent ball skills, good instincts.
10. Jelani Jenkins	LB	Florida	Jr.	Runs well; has bulked up to 235.

How much does the NFL love thee? Let us count the picks

SEC coaches got more talking points in April to take on the recruiting trail: The conference had another nine players picked in the first round of the NFL Draft.

Geez, that's 19 in two years — which means almost one-third of the players selected in the first round the past two years have come from the SEC.

What the NFL *really* liked in April was the SEC's defensive players. An amazing eight defensive players from the league went in Round 1, including eight of the first 14 defensive players chosen. In 2011, it was seven offensive players chosen from the league in the first round.

• The nine first-rounders were the third-most ever for the conference, behind 11 in 2007 and 10 in 2011.

• In the past seven drafts, the SEC has had 55 first-round draft choices — 15 more than any other conference (ACC, 40).

• For the second year in a row, Alabama led all schools with four first-round selections.

• In the first three rounds, the SEC had 16 players chosen — 36 in two years.

• When Trent Richardson went to the Cleveland Browns as the third overall pick, that meant that Alabama had the first running back selected by the NFL two years in a row.

First-round SEC selections:

3rd Trent Richardson, RB, Alabama
Cleveland Browns
6th Morris Claiborne, DB, LSU
Dallas Cowboys
7th Mark Barron, S, Alabama
Tampa Bay Buccaneers
10th Stephon Gilmore, DB, South Carolina
Buffalo Bills
12th Fletcher Cox, DL, Mississippi State
Philadelphia Eagles
14th Michael Brockers, DL, LSU
St. Louis Cardinals
17th Dre Kirkpatrick, CB, Alabama
Cincinnati Bengals
18th Melvin Ingram, DE, South Carolina
San Diego Chargers
25th Dont'a Hightower, ILB, Alabama
New England Patriots

Increasing the SEC's footprint

For the second time since the SEC was formed in 1933, the league has expanded. In 1992, South Carolina and Arkansas were annexed. This year, Texas A&M and Missouri from the Big 12 are joining the football power conference.

The SEC initially had 13 teams, but Sewanee withdrew after the 1940 season and Georgia Tech (1964) and Tulane (1966) left more than 45 years ago.

It's worth noting that none of the four most recent additions have had great success in football. South Carolina and Missouri haven't won a conference championship since 1969. Arkansas' last con-

FOUR-YEAR STANDINGS

Alabama is six games ahead of the field in this four-year snapshot, in which the West has been gobbling up championships and BCS at-large berths.

EAST	SEC	Pct.	ALL	Pct.	C/D	BCS	B	Comment
Florida	22-10	.625	41-13	.759	1/2	2	4	Last two years in SEC — 7-9?!
Georgia	20-12	.625	34-19	.642	0/1	0	4	Quietly a big 2011; even bigger in '12?
South Carolina	18-14	.563	34-19	.642	0/1	0	4	Has been getting "superior" and "superior."
Tennessee	11-21	.344	23-27	.460	0/0	0	2	One winning season in the past four.
Kentucky	9-23	.281	25-26	.490	0/0	0	3	Have they squandered momentum?
Vanderbilt	7-25	.219	17-33	.340	0/0	0	2	Have been to as many bowls as the Vols!
Missouri (Big 12)	20-13	.606	36-17	.679	0/2	0	4	These Tigers have been to seven bowls in a row.

WEST	SEC	Pct.	ALL	Pct.	C/D	BCS	B	Comment
Alabama	28-4	.875	48-6	.889	1/2	3	4	Now 36-4 in the past three seasons.
LSU	22-10	.688	41-12	.774	1/1	1	4	Now 24-3 in the past two seasons.
Auburn	17-15	.531	35-17	.673	1/1	1	3	Take out 2010 season, 9-15 in SEC games.
Arkansas	17-15	.531	34-17	.667	0/0	1	3	Flying high until the untimely crash.
Mississippi State	11-21	.344	25-25	.500	0/0	0	2	Looking for third straight winning record.
Ole Miss	10-22	.313	24-26	.480	0/0	0	2	It sure got away from Houston Nutt in a hurry.
Texas A&M (Big 12)	15-18	.455	26-25	.510	0/0	0	3	Is 0-7 vs. SEC and Missouri in past four years.

Note: C=Championship or co-championship; D=Division title; BCS=BCS bowls; B=Bowls

ference crown was in 1989 and Texas A&M's was in 1998.

But here's the real problem: Missouri becomes the *third* team in the league nicknamed the Tigers, and the second team in the league located in Columbia. That's Columbia, Mo., while the Gamecocks reside in Columbia, S.C.

Not such a bad fit, after all

There are lots of ways to look at the SEC expanding, with Missouri and Texas A&M entering the league this season. We've heard all the lines about how the SEC is expanding into the Midwest and Southwest, and how it doesn't make any sense for Missouri to fit into the SEC East.

But consider that from Columbia, Mo., the Tigers will need to fly fairly short hops to East rivals Vanderbilt (356 miles to Nashville), Kentucky (416 miles to Lexington), Tennessee (497 miles to Knoxville) and Georgia (562 miles to Atlanta). OK, so the trips to Florida and South Carolina are a bit of a hike, but every team in every league has a couple of long trips.

Same for Texas A&M ... less than 400 miles to LSU and Arkansas, and around 500 to Ole Miss, and Mississippi State.

Every conference has some long trips. Penn State traveling to Nebraska for a Big Ten conference game, Washington to Arizona for a Pac-12 game, Miami to Boston College for an ACC game, West Virginia to Texas for a Big 12 game — they're all well over 1,000 miles.

Turning pro

After losing 14 players early to the NFL Draft for three straight seasons, the SEC lost only 10 this time — including three each from Alabama and LSU. Of the 10, seven went in the first round.

The Crimson Tide lost running back Trent Richardson, linebacker Dont'a Hightower and cornerback Dre Kirkpatrick. LSU lost receiver Rueben Randle, cornerback Morris Claiborne and defensive tackle Michael Brockers.

South Carolina lost talented receiver Alshon Jeffery and gifted cornerback Stephon Gilmore.

Georgia lost tight end Orson Charles and Mississippi State lost defensive tackle Fletcher Cox.

Non-conference foes

The first week of the season, SEC teams will play several attractive non-conference games.

- Alabama tackles Michigan in Cowboys Stadium.
- Tennessee takes on NC State in the Chick-fil-A Kickoff Classic in the Georgia Dome.
- Kentucky hosts Louisville in a heated in-state rivalry.

Most SEC schools play one quality non-league team:

- Auburn-Clemson
- Florida-Florida State
- Georgia-Georgia Tech
- Ole Miss-Texas
- LSU-Washington
- Missouri-Arizona State
- South Carolina-Clemson
- Texas A&M-SMU

Vanderbilt plays two BCS opponents — Northwestern and Wake Forest — prompting second-year coach James Franklin to say the Commodores need to soften the schedule.

Among the weaker teams playing SEC foes: Western Kentucky (twice), Jacksonville State (twice), Western Carolina, Georgia State, Georgia Southern, Alabama A&M, Louisiana-Monroe, North Texas, Towson State, Buffalo, Central Arkansas, Sam Houston State, South Carolina State, Wofford, Kent State, Samford and Presbyterian.

Coaching changes

The SEC had two head coaching changes during the offseason — one expected, the other a bombshell.

After taking Ole Miss to consecutive Cotton Bowls, coach Houston Nutt won just one SEC game over the next two years and was fired. He was replaced by Arkansas State head coach Hugh Freeze, a former Ole Miss assistant. Freeze is the Rebels' fourth head coach in the past 14 years.

Arkansas' Bobby Petrino was 21-5 in the last two years, including a BCS bowl and a Cotton Bowl victory, but he was fired in April ... well, you know the story.

Also, Texas A&M fired Mike Sherman and hired pass-happy Kevin Sumlin from Houston.

The SEC replaced five defensive coordinators. Brian VanGorder was hired at Auburn, Paul Haynes at Arkansas, Sal Sunseri at Tennessee, Lorenzo Ward at South Carolina and Dave Wommack at Ole Miss.

Four schools have new offensive coordinators: Brent Pease at Florida, Scot Loeffler at Auburn, Doug Nussmeier at Alabama and Paul Petrino at Arkansas.

SEC fans passionate

SEC fans once again showed their thirst for football by pouring through the turnstiles at spring games.

The average (37,357) was down slightly from the previous year (39,063) but some of the numbers were impressive. Alabama, the defending national champion, attracted 78,526 and has averaged 86,000 over the past five years.

Georgia (44,177), Auburn (43,427), Florida (38,100), Tennessee (35,421), South Carolina (34,513) and LSU (33,000) each ranked in the top 10 among spring crowds.

Extra points:

- After posting a school-record 11 wins, South Carolina's Steve Spurrier was feeling cocky again. He said if Nick Saban wants to be considered one of the greatest coaches of all-time, he needs to win somewhere besides Alabama because the Tide has always won. He also said he wanted to play Georgia early in the season because the Bulldogs usually have several players suspended.
- Texas A&M and Missouri had to change two policies after joining the SEC. The Aggies had to move some student seats from behind the visitor's bench, and Missouri had to change its policy of allowing fans to leave the stadium at halftime to re-engage in tailgating activities.
- The SEC has had two teams in a BCS bowl six years in a row and has taken seven of the 12 slots in the national title game.
- Alabama's 48 wins in a four-year period is a school record.
- LSU's Les Miles has had five 10-win seasons in seven years; the Tigers had seven in school history before he arrived.
- Tennessee has lost 27 games since the start of the 2008 season, the most in a four-year stretch in school history.
- Florida did not have a first-team All-SEC selection for the first time in 40 years.
- Arkansas has had back-to-back 10-win seasons for the first time since 1988-89.

RATING **THE SEC**

QUARTERBACKS

1. ARKANSAS
2. GEORGIA
3. TENNESSEE
4. MISSOURI
5. ALABAMA
6. SOUTH CAROLINA
7. LSU
8. FLORIDA
9. VANDERBILT
10. MISSISSIPPI STATE
11. TEXAS A&M
12. AUBURN
13. OLE MISS
14. KENTUCKY

Ten starters return, including five who averaged more than 200 passing yards per game.

Arkansas' Tyler Wilson replaced Ryan Mallett and threw for an SEC-best 3,638 yards and led the league in passing efficiency among full-time starters. He had a 24-6 touchdown-interception ratio.

Georgia's Aaron Murray had a second consecutive 3,000-yard season, firing a school-record 35 touchdown passes and leading the Dawgs to the SEC title game.

Tennessee's Tyler Bray, who has yet to start more than seven games in a season, has put up some gaudy numbers — 3,832 yards in 16 games, 35 touchdowns, six 300-yard games — but he's yet to beat an SEC team with a winning record.

Missouri's James Franklin had 3,846 total yards in the Big 12 (more than any SEC quarterback) and accounted for 36 touchdowns. He rushed for 981 yards and 15 scores against weak Big 12 defenses.

Alabama's AJ McCarron managed the Crimson Tide to a national championship, averaging 202.6 passing yards per game and ranking fifth in the SEC in passing efficiency.

South Carolina's Connor Shaw was third in the SEC in passing efficiency and his seven rushing touchdowns were second on the team. He stepped up and helped the Gamecocks finish with 11 victories.

RUNNING BACKS

1. ARKANSAS
2. SOUTH CAROLINA
3. LSU
4. ALABAMA
5. GEORGIA
6. AUBURN
7. VANDERBILT
8. TEXAS A&M
9. MISSOURI
10. FLORIDA
11. TENNESSEE
12. MISSISSIPPI STATE
13. KENTUCKY
14. OLE MISS

The SEC is again loaded at running back.

Arkansas' Knile Davis, who led the SEC with 1,322 yards in 2010, missed last season due to a knee injury. He's joined in the backfield by Dennis Johnson (670 yards) and Ronnie Wingo Jr.

South Carolina's Marcus Lattimore might be the nation's best back. He gained 818 yards in seven games last year and had 1,197 yards as a freshman despite injuries. He has scored 30 touchdowns in two seasons.

No team has more depth than LSU: Michael Ford (756 yards), Spencer Ware (707), Alfred Blue (539) and Kenny Hilliard (336). Each rushed for at least seven touchdowns.

Alabama doesn't have a proven great back, but Eddie Lacy (674 yards, 7.1 per carry) could be that guy, and there is ample depth.

Georgia's Isaiah Crowell scampered for 850 yards during a troubled freshmen season, and the Dawgs signed Keith Marshall, one of the nation's top running backs.

Vanderbilt's Zac Stacy (1,193 yards, 14 TDs) is the lone SEC 1,000-yard returner from last season. Missouri's Henry Josey rushed for 1,168 yards in the Big 12, but a horrific knee injury likely will force him to miss this season.

RECEIVERS

1. TENNESSEE
2. ARKANSAS
3. GEORGIA
4. LSU
5. TEXAS A&M
6. MISSOURI
7. VANDERBILT
8. FLORIDA
9. MISSISSIPPI STATE
10. ALABAMA
11. AUBURN
12. SOUTH CAROLINA
13. KENTUCKY
14. OLE MISS

Tennessee's Da'Rick Rogers caught a team-high 67 passes for 1,040 yards and nine touchdowns last season, but he's not the best receiver on the team. Acrobatic Justin Hunter, a 26-foot long jumper, tore his ACL in the third game of last season after posting back-to-back 100-yard games. UT also signed the nation's top-ranked junior college prospect, wide receiver Cordarrelle Patterson, and four high-profile high school recruits.

Despite losing Jarius Wright and Joe Adams (120 combined catches), the Hogs return Cobi Hamilton (34 catches) and tight end Chris Gragg (41).

Georgia's Malcolm Mitchell (45 for 665) became a big-play threat as a freshman and he's joined by Tavarres King (47 for 705, eight touchdowns) and Marlon Brown.

LSU lost Rueben Randle early to the NFL, but returns Odell Beckham, Russell Shepard and Jarvis Landry.

Texas A&M's Ryan Swope (89 for 1,207) and Uzoma Nwachukwu (50 for 639) are a productive 1-2 punch, but they won't have quarterback Ryan Tannehill from last season.

Missouri's T.J. Moe (54-649) was honorable mention All-Big 12. Vanderbilt's Jordan Matthews (41-778) led the SEC in yards per catch (19.0). Kentucky's La'Rod King (40-598) ranked among the SEC's top 10 receivers last season, as did Auburn's Emory Blake (36-613).

OFFENSIVE LINE

1. ALABAMA
2. LSU
3. TEXAS A&M
4. TENNESSEE
5. SOUTH CAROLINA
6. ARKANSAS
7. VANDERBILT
8. FLORIDA
9. MISSOURI
10. MISSISSIPPI STATE
11. GEORGIA
12. AUBURN
13. OLE MISS
14. KENTUCKY

Alabama led the SEC in rushing last season thanks to Outland Trophy winner Barrett Jones, who has moved from left tackle to center. Guard Chance Warmack and tackle D.J. Fluker are All-SEC caliber. Promising sophomore Cyrus Kouandjio takes over at left tackle.

LSU returns four starters from a team that led the SEC in rushing touchdowns and ranked second in rushing yards per game and scoring. The Tigers have the best pair of tackles in the league in Alex Hurst and Chris Faulk.

Texas A&M returns all five starters from a line that averaged 39 points, 490 total yards and 5.1 rushing yards per carry. Tackles Luke Joeckel and Jake Matthews are the anchors.

Although Tennessee had its worst rushing offense since 1964, all five starters return from a talented — though underachieving — group, led by tackles Ja'Wuan James and Tiny Richardson and guard Dallas Thomas.

South Carolina lost running back Marcus Lattimore in October, yet the line was strong enough to help the Gamecocks rank third in the SEC in rushing. Arkansas' line, led by center Travis Swanson and guard Alvin Bailey, is adept at pass protection and run blocking.

Vanderbilt returns four starters from a unit that produced a 1,000-yard rusher and helped the Commodores reach a bowl game.

Tide, Tigers look to dominate again

DEFENSIVE LINE

1. LSU
2. SOUTH CAROLINA
3. GEORGIA
4. ALABAMA
5. FLORIDA
6. TEXAS A&M
7. ARKANSAS
8. AUBURN
9. TENNESSEE
10. MISSISSIPPI STATE
11. MISSOURI
12. VANDERBILT
13. KENTUCKY
14. OLE MISS

LSU lost two starters on the defensive line, including a first-round draft pick, but the Tigers' front four will be better this season. Ends Sam Montgomery (nine sacks) and Barkevious Mingo (eight sacks) will likely be future first-round picks, and tackle Bennie Logan is a rising star. LSU led the SEC in sacks last season with 39.

South Carolina, third in the SEC in sacks (31), has two of the nation's most athletic ends in Jadeveon Clowney (eight sacks) and Devin Taylor (six sacks). Sophomore tackle Kelcy Quarles is a rising star.

Georgia has two beasts at nose tackle: 350-pound John Jenkins, practically unblockable during the spring, and 6-6, 350-pound Kwame Geathers. End Abry Jones is solid.

Alabama, which led the nation in run defense, is reloading with nose tackle Jesse Williams and ends Damion Square, Ed Stinson and Quinton Dial.

Florida has two high-quality linemen in Sharrif Floyd and Dominique Easley. The top playmaker — end Ronald Powell (torn ACL in the spring) — might not return until October.

Texas A&M, second in the Big 12 in run defense, is going from a 3-4 to a 4-3; former outside linebacker Damontre Moore will flourish at the end position.

LINEBACKERS

1. GEORGIA
2. ALABAMA
3. FLORIDA
4. TEXAS A&M
5. TENNESSEE
6. SOUTH CAROLINA
7. AUBURN
8. LSU
9. MISSOURI
10. ARKANSAS
11. MISSISSIPPI STATE
12. VANDERBILT
13. OLE MISS
14. KENTUCKY

As Georgia showed dramatic improvement in Year 2 of the 3-4 defense, linebackers Jarvis Jones (SEC-best 13.5 sacks) and Alec Ogletree thrived, although Ogletree battled injuries. They helped the Dawgs rank third in the SEC in run defense and fourth nationally in pass efficiency defense. The Dawgs also return starter Michael Gilliard, with another starting linebacker moving to end.

Alabama is once again loaded at this position with All-SEC caliber C.J. Mosley and Nico Johnson, as well as up-and-comer Adrian Hubbard.

Florida's Jelani Jenkins and Jon Bostic are multi-year starters on a defense that ranked fifth in the SEC in yards allowed.

Texas A&M, which is switching from a 3-4 to a 4-3, returns four linebackers from a defense that allowed 101.8 rushing yards per game. Jonathan Stewart had 98 tackles, Sean Porter 79 stops (9.5 sacks) and Steven Jenkins 61.

Tennessee found two freshmen stars last year in A.J. Johnson (80 tackles) and athletic Curt Maggitt. Herman Lathers and Greg King return from injuries as the Vols evolve from a 4-3 to a 3-4.

At Missouri, Andrew Wilson led the team in tackles (98), while Zaviar Gooden was third (80). Middle linebacker Will Ebner is returning from injury.

SECONDARY

1. LSU
2. GEORGIA
3. ALABAMA
4. SOUTH CAROLINA
5. FLORIDA
6. MISSISSIPPI STATE
7. TENNESSEE
8. AUBURN
9. OLE MISS
10. MISSOURI
11. ARKANSAS
12. VANDERBILT
13. KENTUCKY
14. TEXAS A&M

The SEC had the nation's top four teams in pass efficiency defense — Alabama, South Carolina, LSU, Georgia — an indication of how many outstanding defensive backs were in the league.

For two years running, LSU has had arguably the nation's best defensive back — Patrick Peterson in 2010 and Morris Claiborne last year. This year, add cornerback Tyrann "Honey Badger" Mathieu to the mix, along with All-SEC safety Eric Reid and corner Tharold Simon.

Georgia led the SEC with 20 interceptions and All-American safety Bacarri Rambo led with eight pick-offs. The Dawgs have corners Branden Smith and Sanders Commings, but all three will serve early season suspensions, one reason why receiver Malcolm Mitchell worked mostly at corner during the spring.

Alabama was the lone SEC team to hold opponents to less than 50 percent passing. Safety Robert Lester (SEC-high eight interceptions in 2010) and cornerback Dee Milliner headline a deep unit.

South Carolina, tied for second in the SEC with 19 picks, will miss Stephon Gilmore, but All-SEC safety D.J. Swearinger and corner Akeem Auguste are back.

Florida returns four defensive backs from an underachieving unit that was last in the league in interceptions (eight). Mississippi State's Johnthan Banks (five picks) might be the SEC's best cover corner.

SPECIAL TEAMS

1. LSU
2. ARKANSAS
3. FLORIDA
4. OLE MISS
5. ALABAMA
6. AUBURN
7. TEXAS A&M
8. MISSOURI
9. TENNESSEE
10. VANDERBILT
11. SOUTH CAROLINA
12. GEORGIA
13. MISSISSIPPI STATE
14. KENTUCKY

LSU has exceptional special teams play. The Tigers return the SEC's most accurate kicker in Drew Alleman (16 of 18 field-goal attempts) and a clutch punter in Brad Wing, who averaged 44.4 yards per attempt. Tyrann Mathieu was fourth in the nation in punt returns (15.6).

Arkansas isn't far behind. The Hogs had the top statistical punter in Dylan Breeding (45.3) and reliable kicker Zach Hocker (21 of 27 field-goal attempts). Dennis Johnson ranked third in kick returns (25.6) and has a history of long runbacks.

At Florida, Caleb Sturgis (22 of 26 FGs) is one of the nation's top kickers, while Andre Debose was second in the SEC in kick returns (26.1). The Gators are always adept at blocking kicks.

Ole Miss (kind of) led the nation in punt return average (15.6), but didn't have enough runbacks to qualify. The Rebels have a strong punter (Tyler Campbell, 43.6) and kicker (Bryson Rose, 9 of 11 FGs).

Alabama kicker Jeremy Shelley (21 of 27 FGs) scored 115 points — third in the SEC. The Tide always finds capable return men.

Auburn's Tre Mason (26.4) was the SEC's top kick returner.

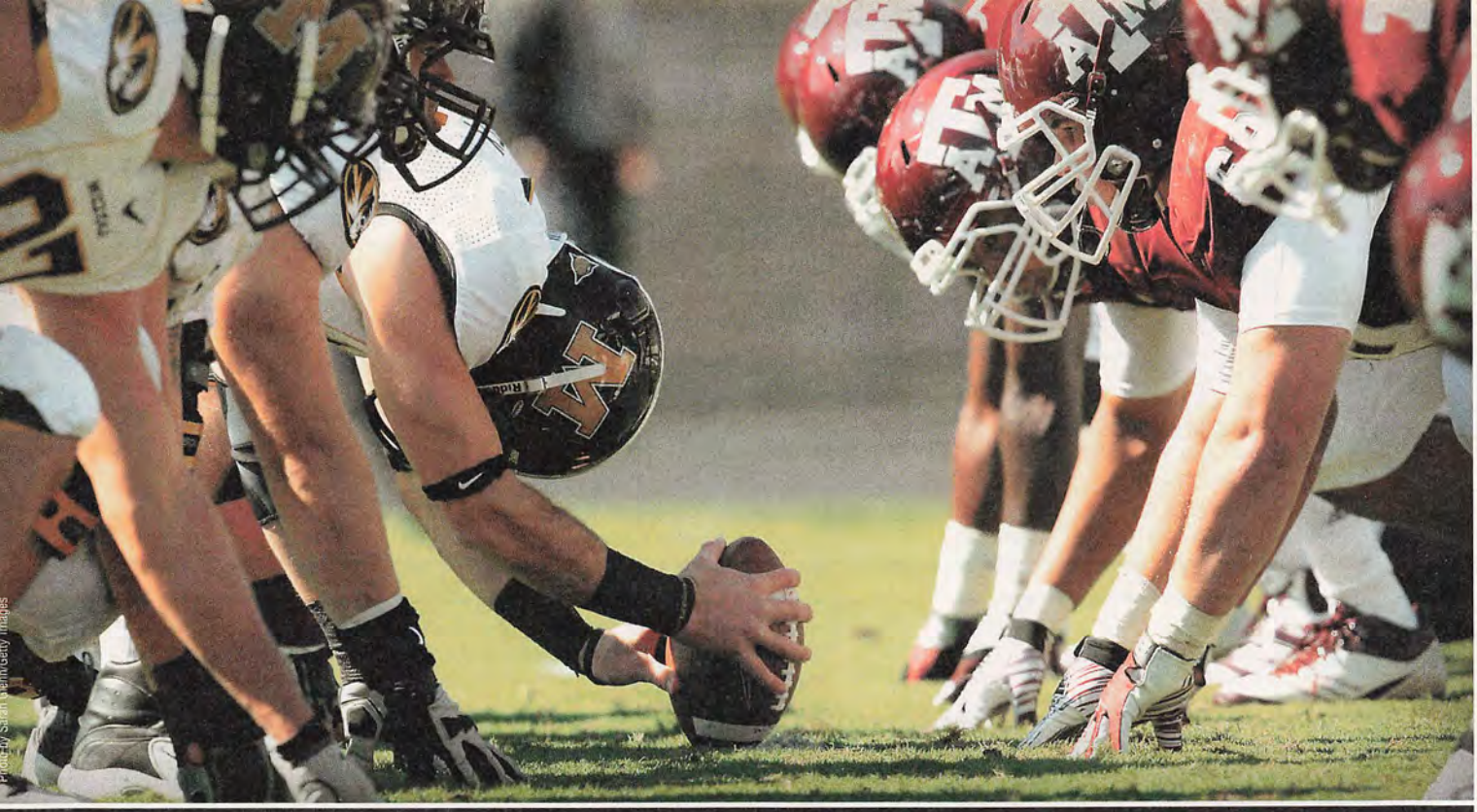


Photo by Stephen Dunn/Getty Images

STRENGTH EVERYWHERE CONFERENCE

CAN THE SEC'S NEW WESTERN AND NORTHERN OUTPOSTS KEEP UP?

BY DENNIS DODD

Dixie, meet Show-Me.

Aggie, meet Aubie.

Make room at the tailgate for gumbo *and* toasted ravioli; for fried gator *and* barbeque.

It's time for — as they say in SEC country — big-boy football.

All of it is going to take some getting used to.

But Mike Slive knows how to work a room. In the spring, the 71-year-old SEC commissioner led a congregation in a scene that seemed impossible a year earlier.

This gathering was squeezed into a back room of the Westport Flea Market, a humble eatery in a Kansas City, Mo., entertainment district that traces its roots back to the city's founding. Miles away from whatever Mason-Dixon boundary you'd want to draw.

Slive was speaking before about 300 *Missouri* fans — and they were lapping up whatever sugar-coated frosting the commish was spreading.

They were amazed when told that if current or former SEC athletes competing in the 2008 Olympics would have been a country, the conference would have finished fourth in Beijing. They cackled when Slive said, "You don't schedule your wedding (or) your Bar Mitzvah in the South until you find out what the football schedule is."

They yelled as one when the commissioner completed his revival, er, speech with Missouri's trademark, "M-I-Z ...

"Z-O-U!" they screamed back.

That's one scene of many as Mizzou and Texas A&M transition to the SEC.

To Tiger, Aggie, SEC and college football fans, it's just starting to set in. But what does it mean now that the whirlwind courtship is over?

A&M seems to be a better fit because of its financial and emotional dedication to football. It recruits Louisiana heavily, can renew an old Southwest Conference rivalry with Arkansas and in general seems to tip easily toward the Southeast. Even if it is in the SEC West.

For Missouri (the third "Tigers" in the league), the move seemed to be such a reach when it first came up, that ... well, heading into actual competition, it still feels like a reach.

Photo by Aaron M. Sprecher/Getty Images

This is a school that traces its conference roots back a century to the old Missouri Valley Intercollegiate Athletic Association which bears genetic markers to today's Big 12. It went kicking and screaming to the SEC, at least in the western side of the state where fans revel in the rivalry with Kansas and an annual basketball appearance at the Big 12 tournament in Kansas City.

That's all gone now.

While A&M has more of that football tradition than Missouri, the once-powerful Aggies haven't won a conference title since 1998. That's also the last time A&M finished in the Top 15. In fact, Mike Sherman was fired as coach in the offseason against the wishes of athletic director Bill Byrne.

There were a lot of Aggies — similar to Missouri — who were against the conference move itself, guided by a small power elite. Their out-front guy was bow-tied A&M president R. Bowen Loftin.

Gone is the rivalry with Texas. With access to SEC recruits — and with the SEC having access to Texas recruits — Aggies everywhere hope the dynamic changes. In a strange way, maybe they can rub it in the face of the Longhorns while playing in a different league.

While A&M takes a step up in competition, so does new coach Kevin Sumlin. The former Aggie assistant got Houston to within an eyelash of a BCS bowl, then pursued his deserved promotion.

Maybe this is his — and their — time.

Sumlin inherits a program that is ninth in the SEC in athletic department expenses directly allocated to football. Missouri is 12th. (Thanks to the *Birmingham News*, which assembled the data based on 2009-2010 figures.)

As far as that SEC culture, A&M immediately becomes tied with Auburn in the conference for No. 1 in all-time major infractions cases (seven).

Sumlin, though, has vowed to remake a program that has grown a bit stale — in facilities, as well as football. CBSSports.com's Bruce Feldman dropped in on a staff meeting earlier this year with Sumlin holding court.

"The reason you guys are here is we gotta do something about the feel of this (football) building," Sumlin told a roomful of key staff and architects.

"This feels old and stiff and cold — everything is dark. I'm always going around flipping on lights. This has to reflect that we have a younger staff. This building should be a tool for teaching and recruiting."

Even during a dip in fortunes, the potential is there. Quarterback Ryan Tannehill materialized as a high NFL draft choice. All five starting offensive linemen return. The tradition of The 12th Man — A&M's undying fan support — will never go away. The SEC is going to have to get used to A&M's Corps of Cadets yell leaders as much as the school is

Photo by Thomas Campbell-USPresswire

going to have to get used to the SEC.

Missouri has been content, it seems, being a middle-of-the-road program for most of its history. It hasn't won an outright conference title since 1960. It was ranked No. 1 for a week in 2007 and could have played for a national championship had it beaten Oklahoma in the Big 12 title game. It didn't, and settled for the Cotton Bowl.

The Tigers' last BCS bowl was the Orange in 1970. But they take pride in an upsurge under coach Gary Pinkel. From 2007-2010, Missouri won 40 games. It has been to a school-record seven consecutive bowls. Mizzou has become somewhat of a quarterback factory, pumping out Brad Smith (all-purpose star with Jets, Bills), Chase Daniel (Super Bowl ring with Saints) and Blaine Gabbert (top-10 pick, Jaguars) in recent years.

If nothing had happened in the realignment merry-go-round, Missouri still has never been hotter. Enrollment is booming. The basketball program spent much of the season in the Top 10. The signing of the nation's No. 1 football recruit — Dorial Green-Beckham — sent a couple of messages.

A potential star, sure, but already a sign to the rest of the SEC that Missouri has come to play that big-boy football.

"That was a good day for us," Pinkel said. "It helps our brand name. Going to the SEC, the statement was made. If he's here, almost anybody will look at us. Why would they not?"

It means Pinkel is placing more recruiting emphasis in Georgia and Florida. There will be billboards, direct mail. Lots of direct mail — 30,000 pieces *per week* in the Southeast, Pinkel said, aimed at high school students, coaches and administrators.

The program isn't cutting recruiting ties with the state of Texas, which has sustained Missouri greatly during Pinkel's reign. It is merely repositioning — telling those kids what it is telling everyone: Do you want to play in the best conference around?

Since 2007, Missouri is 48-19 — a better record in that span than Auburn, South Carolina, Arkansas and Georgia. Since 2006, Missouri is one of six BCS schools to win at least eight games each season. The only SEC program on that list is LSU.

The program has been more than competitive with the SEC, going 19-8-1. Its only losing record is against Kentucky and Georgia.

Yes, but big-boy football in the South means enduring birds being flipped at the team bus — or worse. It means humidity and playing against the best defensive linemen in the world. It means a culture shift, one that A&M and Mizzou are going to have to get used to.

"I don't think they (Missouri) fit culturally," said Ethan Rault, an LSU senior from Mandeville, La.

"I don't know if they have a rabid fan base that belongs in the SEC. They don't have enough tradition. I feel like if they join the SEC, they're not going to be competitive at all. They going to be like Vanderbilt. They'll be our new Vanderbilt.

"I like A&M. They belong more," Rault added. "Their culture fits more. They have a more passionate fan base."

Yet, Trammell Coleman, an Auburn fan from Columbus, Ga., said flatly, "A&M's a joke. What do they bring? What value do they have to us? What strengths do they have to bring to us?"

Well, there's the barbeque, for one thing.

Besides, a river runs through the Strength Everywhere Conference — or at least is shared by it. Missouri becomes the seventh SEC state to bump up against the Mississippi River, joining Kentucky, Tennessee, Louisiana, Arkansas, Mississippi, and, of course, the other newbie: Texas.

Can we assume a rivalry between the Longhorn Network and a possible SEC Network? The former is a big reason why the Aggies left the Big 12. The latter could become a huge financial windfall for its members.

Either way, SEC programming is about to get a lot more intriguing. Welcome to the South, guys.

Now get ready for your initiation.

BIG TV PAYDAY COULD BE AWAITING SEC

BY DENNIS DODD

Photo by Chris Graythen/Getty Images

The current gold standard for college football television is housed in an old Montgomery Ward catalog building in Chicago. No, this is not another hosanna to ESPN. This story is much more modern, more urgent.

The building's rather drab exterior hides a different great American success story.

Many are watching the Big Ten Network closely. It was the first cable start-up to have 30 million subscribers within its first 30 days. The network programs have been nominated for Sports Emmys. Profitable within two years, the success of the BTN — which has its fifth birthday in August — is what everyone else is chasing.

So far, no one is even close.

The Mtn — the Mountain West's stand-alone network — folded in the offseason. The much-discussed Longhorn Network is having problems finding cable companies that will carry it. The Pac-12 Network launches this fall with lots of optimism, but no significant numbers yet to digest.

Which leads us back to the BTN.

The successful launch of a similar network may never occur again on such a scale. Now it's up to the SEC to decide: It is probably the only conference with the households, the brand names, the inventory and the insatiable interest to match the Big Ten.

Not that anyone is saying out loud that the two leagues are in competition but, well, they are. The two biggest conferences with the most clout in the best markets are going to decide a piece of the modern college

football television war.

As *Lindy's* went to press, the SEC had reopened its landmark contract with CBS and ESPN to renegotiate (at the least) higher rights fees because of the addition of Missouri and Texas A&M. At most, SEC commissioner Mike Slive wants to compete with his chief rival, the Big Ten's Jim Delany.

In 2011, the SEC distributed about $18.3 million per school. The Big Ten number is slightly higher.

How far over that amount can networks and conferences go?

Plenty, if you consider escalator clauses built into deals. That, plus factor in that college football remains generally considered as undervalued in the marketplace. That's why we're seeing these monster deals.

Live TV sells.

In that sense, college football's closest TV relative may be American Idol. Both are live, the end result is unknown, and given the immediacy of the social network, both are DVR-proof.

It may be as simple as ESPN/CBS deciding to pay more for an expanded SEC. In the past year, the ACC has doubled its income. That was BEFORE it added Pittsburgh and Syracuse, which could come aboard as early as 2013.

The Big 12 — which has lost four schools since June 2010 — signed a new deal for its secondary rights with Fox in April 2011. The Big Ten was out front of everyone agreeing to that 25-year network deal worth $2.8 billion in 2006. Its primary rights with ESPN expire in 2016.

If the SEC's current rights-holders don't ante up for Missouri and Texas A&M, the next logical step would be to look for an SEC Network on a sports tier near you. As mentioned, though, it's a tough slog.

"It's simply not correct to assume they (SEC) can do it," said an industry source. "Unless they convince ESPN, they can't."

ESPN has "exclusivity" on such a deal. The SEC would need permission to launch its own network. The Worldwide Leader probably isn't going to allow the SEC to profit over content it controls.

However, multiple SEC sources disputed that, saying there is a way for the conference to launch a stand-alone network. That would probably involve some sort of buy-back by schools of a non-conference game. That's commonly called third-tier rights.

Here we are, then, back in Chicago where Delany continues to redefine the college television landscape. The BTN had the advantage of having equity partner Fox. It still had to go cable operator-to-cable operator, convincing executives to put the network on their systems. The BTN now is available in 80 million homes.

By the end of its current joint-operating venture with Fox, the network will throw off profits and rights fees estimated to be $4 billion-$5 billion according to Delany.

That's about $15 million per school, per year *from the league's cable network alone*. That's a network that was considered a huge risk in the industry when the deal was struck six years ago.

Can that kind of overnight success be duplicated?

"I don't know if you can or not," Delany said.

And Slive isn't sure ... or isn't saying. Keep in mind there is a huge reason why the SEC expanded to Missouri and A&M. Neither school has a particular heritage with the Southeast, nor are they football powers at the moment. But they do represent additional inventory.

LIVE TV SELLS.

IN THAT SENSE, COLLEGE FOOTBALL'S CLOSEST TV RELATIVE MAY BE AMERICAN IDOL. BOTH ARE LIVE, THE END RESULT IS UNKNOWN, AND GIVEN THE IMMEDIACY OF THE SOCIAL NETWORK, BOTH ARE DVR-PROOF.

And inventory is everything.

Consider that ESPN and CBS have that 15-year, $3 billion contract with the SEC. When it was finalized in 2009, it was considered the industry standard. Now it may not be. The Pac-12 is making noise about making $30 million per year once its network ramps up. (Industry sources, including some Big Ten officials, scoff at those projections, by the way.)

That $3 billion accounted for the first- and second-tier rights, basically the best games available. SEC schools control one "third-tier" non-conference game per season. That game may be televised on a pay-per-view basis in-state or by a regional network such as the Sunshine Network in Florida.

Either way, that could be some lucrative inventory, ya'll, if it ever got on the open market. By re-opening the contract talks, the SEC is basically asking, "What are we worth to you, *now?*"

Turns out, a lot — in the SEC's opinion.

Population in the Sun Belt is booming. There are a few million folks in Florida who will likely pay a few cents extra per month to watch the Gators play Bowling Green. The addition of Missouri means 2.5 million more cable homes. Let's say a potential SEC Network gets 20 cents per subscriber per month (a very conservative estimate). That's an extra $6 million per year, just from the nation's 18th largest state.

Now consider that the state of Texas holds eight million cable homes.

"We feel adding Texas A&M and Missouri has strengthened us in lots of ways," Slive said, "but it certainly strengthened us in television."

ESPN and CBS will argue, logically, that they are already seen in Texas and Missouri. The option, if a new contract cannot be agreed upon, is arbitration. That has never happened at this level. There's so much money at stake that long-time partners always seem to figure it out rather than screw it up.

ESPN could agree to house the network itself. Maybe shuffle games between its multiple platforms and rebrand the SEC package. Most likely result: The SEC makes a few more bucks. Everything stays with ESPN/CBS. Everybody's happy.

But niche sports networks have been started on less than what the SEC would have to offer. The LHN, for instance, started out with one non-conference football game per season.

Those 14 games for the SEC Network could have a total value of $130 million-$140 million per year, according to one industry source. That's before the SEC starts building out its network with basketball, Olympic sports and unique programming.

But any such start-up is only as good as the amount of football and basketball games it has.

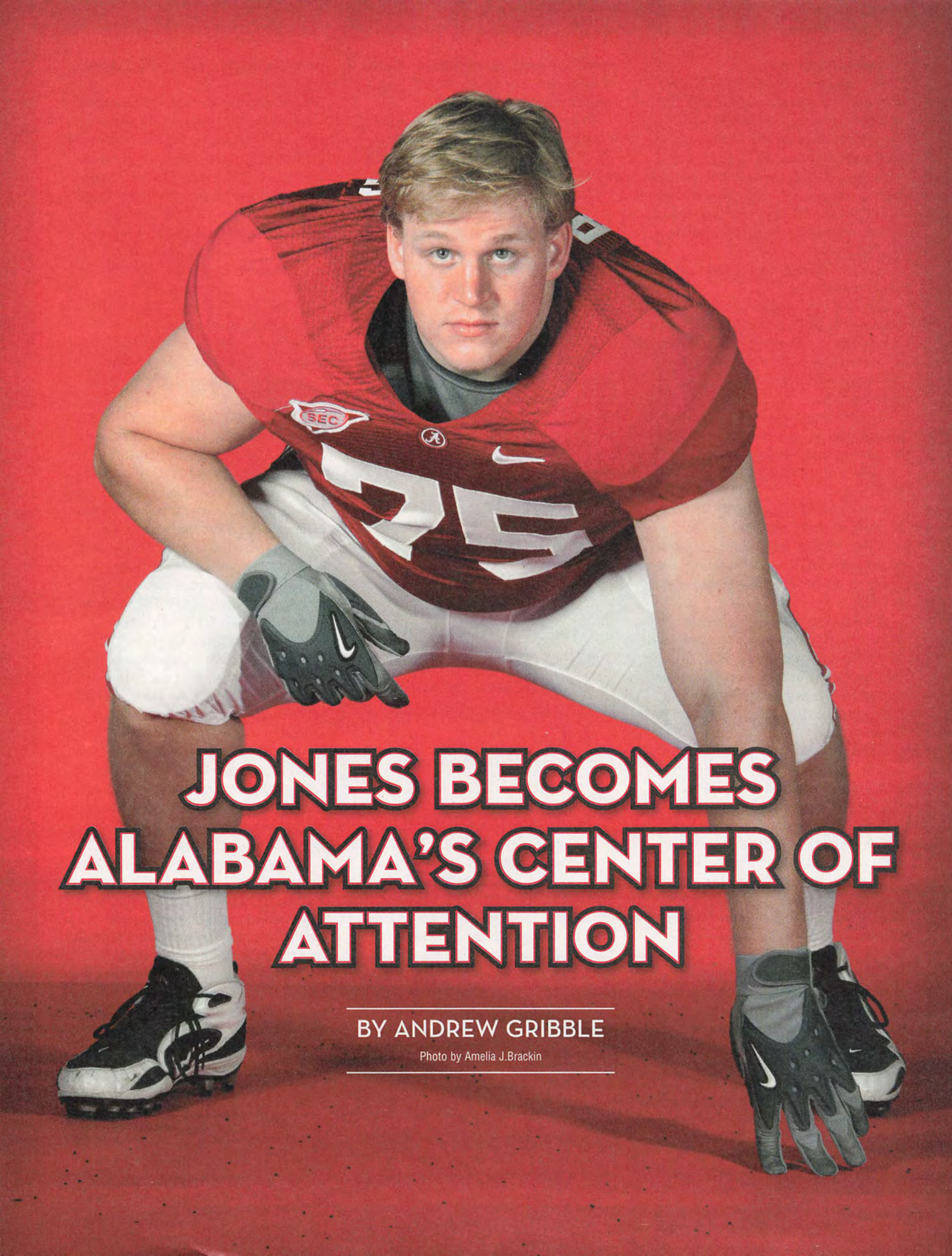
These are significant numbers involving what could eventually be a thin profit margin for schools. Only a handful of athletic departments nationwide make money.

The Big Ten created its own network because it felt at the time that ESPN had "low-balled" the conference during extension talks eight years ago.

"I went and said to our presidents, 'I think we have to explore a network. I don't mean exploring it as a bluff; I mean a real-live exploration,'" Delany said.

Referred to at times as the most powerful man in college sports, he turned out to be ahead of his time.

Now the SEC is attempting to pass him up.



JONES BECOMES ALABAMA'S CENTER OF ATTENTION

BY ANDREW GRIBBLE

Photo by Amelia J.Brackin

While some of his teammates caught rays by the seashore or simply soaked up every last bit of relaxation before spring football resumed, Alabama senior Barrett Jones was in Nicaragua playing soccer and baseball with children at an orphanage.

This was nothing new for Jones, who spent his previous spring break in Haiti, helping build a school. He has been a part of a number of other charitable endeavors during his career at Alabama.

The real culture shock came when he returned to the Alabama practice field.

Instead of lining up at left tackle, where he won the Outland Trophy last season, or at right guard, where he started during his first two seasons with the Crimson Tide, Jones was plopped in the middle of Alabama's massive offensive line at center.

The Crimson Tide, the defending BCS national champion, lost just one starter from last year's offensive line, but it was a critical one: three-year starting center William Vlachos. The void was important enough to move Jones out of the position he'll probably play in the NFL and into one he's played only sparsely until now.

"William will probably be happy, because I used to boss him around and make the calls anyway," Jones said. "He's probably glad that I'm finally playing center."

There are certainly worse offensive lines in the country Jones could be bossing around. In fact, he is the centerpiece of what just might be the best offensive line in the country heading into the 2012 season.

It's certainly one of the biggest and most experienced.

"We've got a lot of games started by those guys, a lot of competitive character in that group, a lot of physicality," Alabama coach Nick Saban said near the conclusion of spring practice.

"We don't have a lot of depth, but I think that that's going to be the real focus as we continue to try to create depth at that position."

There won't be any need for that depth if Alabama's starting five remains healthy and performs at the level it expects.

Jones, listed at 302 pounds, has started all but one game since his freshman season. None has been at center, but he's considered one of the most versatile linemen in the country for a reason, and his progress throughout the spring appeared to validate Saban's decision.

"He got more and more comfortable with every practice and every rep," Saban said. "I'm very, very comfortable with where he is right now at that position in terms of knowledge and experience. Snapping the ball has not been a problem. We're pleased with the progress that he's made."

The same has been said for the lone new face on Alabama's offensive line, Cyrus Kouandjio.

The 311-pound sophomore, who committed to Auburn on Signing Day but eventually signed with Alabama in 2011, overcame a torn anterior cruciate ligament in his left knee faster than anticipated and played at a very high level throughout the spring.

His development at left tackle has provided even more comfort since Jones' move to center.

"Every day he's learning, asking questions, asking me questions," left guard Chance Warmack said. "He's getting better every day."

At right tackle, junior D.J. Fluker brings 22 career starts and a more svelte 335-pound frame. As an eighth-grader, Fluker weighed 400 pounds. When he enrolled at Alabama as one of the country's most coveted prospects in 2009, he was 350.

Now, Fluker said he's down to 22 percent body fat.

"That's pretty good for an offensive lineman," he said, "especially a tackle."

The guards are Warmack, a 320-pound senior who has started 26 consecutive games, and right guard Anthony Steen, a 303-pound junior who boasts 12 career starts.

Add it all up: That's a combined 98 starts from four of the five starters and an average weight of 314 pounds.

"We can be the best in the country," Steen said.

"We have the confidence to be. Our chemistry was just kind of struggling in the beginning of the spring, but we're coming together as a unit now, and if we keep our heads straight and stay focused, we can be the best."

The history of success over the past few seasons has set the bar at a lofty perch.

Going up against some of the toughest rush defenses in college football on a weekly basis, Alabama has averaged more than 200 rushing yards a game since 2009, which is 19th best in the nation. No wonder the Tide produced Heisman Trophy running back Mark Ingram in 2009 and Heisman finalist Trent Richardson in 2011.

Just as important, in its national championship seasons of 2009 and 2011, the Alabama offensive line surrendered just 1.37 sacks per game.

Through all the questions about what the Crimson Tide has to do to become the first back-to-back champions since the dawn of the BCS, Saban has maintained the same stance. This year's team isn't last year's. It has a new identity, new personality and a new set of obstacles to overcome.

"You have to find a group of guys who want to push themselves to be better than the last group," Warmack said. "We're not necessarily competing with the last group. We just want to be a good team. And to do that we have to start at the beginning."

Photo by RD MOORE

There are certainly worse offensive lines in the country Jones could be bossing around. In fact, he is the centerpiece of what just might be the best offensive line in the country heading into the 2012 season.

LEFT: Chance Warmack
BELOW: D. J. Fluker

WHO'S NEXT?

Alabama has had four first-team All-America offensive linemen under coach Nick Saban. This year's team could produce more than one. Here are the four:

YEAR	PLAYER
2008	Antoine Caldwell, center
2008	Andre Smith, tackle
2009	Mike Johnson, guard
2011	Barrett Jones, tackle

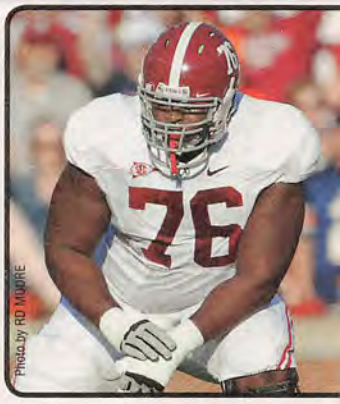


Photo by RD MOORE

ALABAMA CRIMSON TIDE

For more coverage of the Crimson Tide, visit alabama.rivals.com

OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Doug Nussmeier | **DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Kirby Smart** | **STADIUM: Bryant-Denny: 101,821**

AT A GLANCE

2011:
12-1 overall, 7-1 SEC (2nd, West)

COACH:
Nick Saban — At Alabama: 55-12, 5 years; overall: 146-54-1, 16 years

RETURNING STARTERS:
12; 6 offense, 4 defense, kicker, punter

PLAYERS TO WATCH:
QB AJ McCarron, RB Eddie Lacy, C Barrett Jones, RT D.J. Fluker, NG Jesse Williams, LB Nico Johnson, S Robert Lester, CB Dee Milliner, LG Chance Warmack, LB C.J. Mosley

PRIMARY STRENGTHS:
Alabama's offensive line is one of the most experienced in the SEC, and AJ McCarron is a quarterback who makes few mistakes. The Tide's front three on defense should again free up the linebackers to make plays, as Williams and Damion Square bring plenty of size and experience to the table.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS:
There's an endless array of talent on both sides, but experience is lacking at a number of positions simply because these players have had to wait their turn. Special teams play, particularly when it pertained to field-goal accuracy, was one of Alabama's few weaknesses last season and could be again in 2012.

KEY LOSSES:
RB Trent Richardson, LB Courtney Upshaw, LB Dont'a Hightower, CB Dre Kirkpatrick, S Mark Barron

OVERVIEW:
No team has ever repeated as national champion during the BCS era, but Alabama's players and fans expect nothing less. That will be hard to do after losing many key players from the 2011 team and entering 2012 with a target squarely on its back, but the Crimson Tide has enough talent to be locked in as a preseason favorite.

Still 'Hungry,' Tide Eyes Unprecedented BCS Title Repeat

As they head into the season, Alabama's players aren't talking about everything that went right on their way to the 2011 BCS national championship. They aren't hearkening back to when the Crimson Tide rolled to a national title in 2009.

Instead, the players have freely discussed what went wrong in 2010 and how they don't plan to repeat the complacency that settled over the team after winning it all.

"I think it fell back on the leaders back then," junior quarterback AJ McCarron said.

"Coach will tell you: We didn't have a lot of leadership. We had a lot of great players coming back, but I think the team kind of felt like everybody went their own personal way, tried to look out for (themselves) following the '09 season and help their draft status personally."

The Crimson Tide's 2010 season certainly wasn't a disaster. Alabama finished the regular season 9-3, losing to rivals LSU and Auburn by a combined four points, before trouncing Michigan State in the Capital One Bowl.

It just wasn't anywhere near the standard that has been established during Nick Saban's first five years with the Crimson Tide.

Year 6 is no different. Alabama returns 13 starters, including seven on offense, and expects to win the SEC and return to the BCS national championship game.

"We want to keep the standard," senior safety Robert Lester said. "We have a lot of high expectations from last year's team."

No team has ever won consecutive national titles during the BCS era. In a conference as tough as the SEC, which claims the last six BCS champions, it's a daunting task that becomes even more difficult with a big target on the back of each player.

So far, Saban has seen no reason to expect another 2010 type of season — a repeat Alabama isn't looking to accomplish — but he quickly squashed the belief that his team is good enough to "replace and reload" at every position without suffering a few hiccups.

"The character and attitude of this team has been different in, I think, a good way," Saban said.

"There's still a lot that this team has to prove in terms of how hungry they are and how willing they are to make the sacrifices that we need them to make to have the kind of team that we're capable of having."

OFFENSE

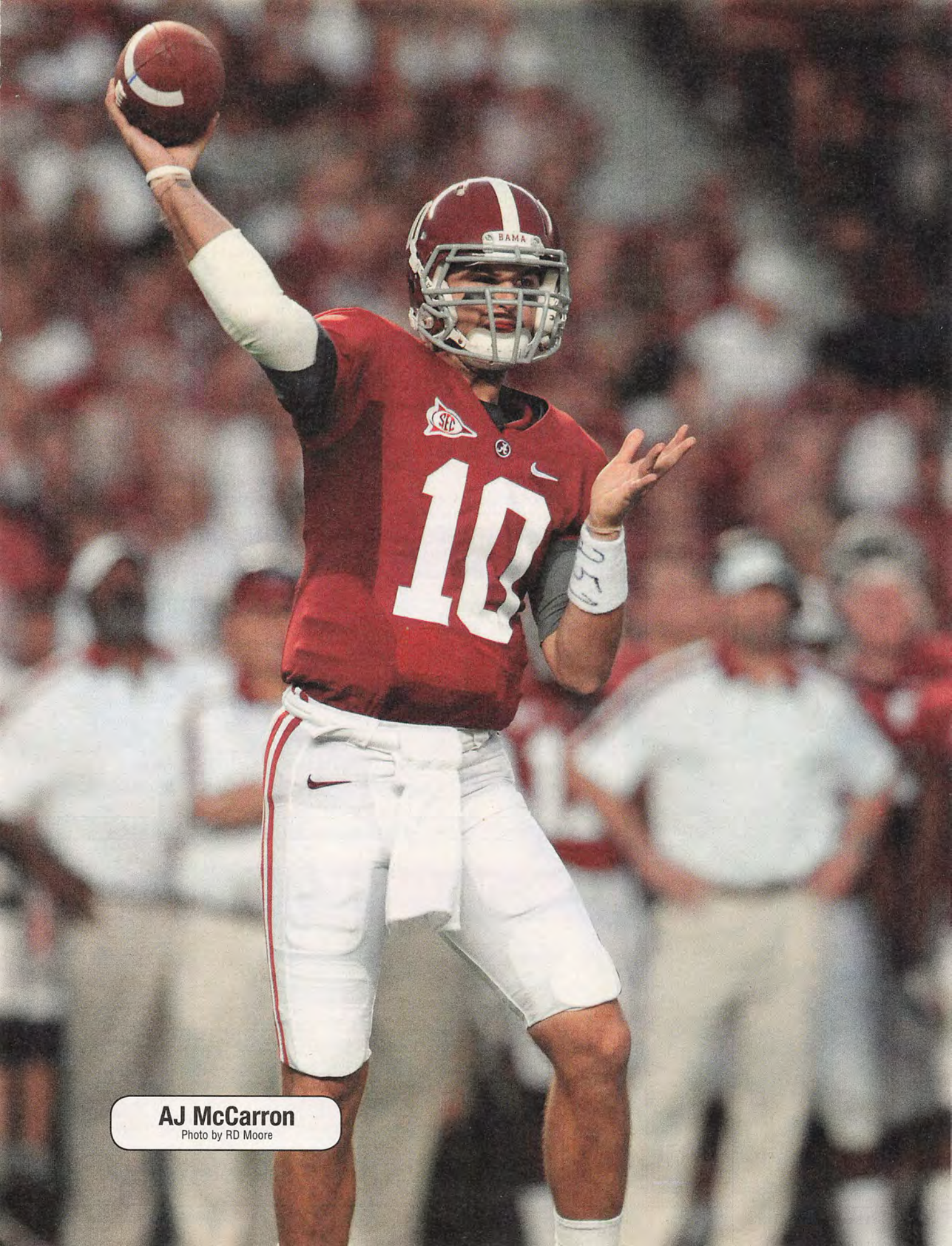
There's a new offensive coordinator and a freshly loaded stable of playmakers poised to replace everything that's gone from the 2011 offense, but Alabama shouldn't look all that different in 2012.

That's at least where the defending national champions stand after a spring in which little, if anything, was revealed about what will change under Doug Nussmeier, the former Washington offensive coordinator who replaces Jim McElwain, who is now the head coach at Colorado State.

"If I saw anything new, I'd have been upset," Saban snapped after Alabama's end-of-spring scrimmage. "Doug has got some new ideas about things he likes to do, and I like those ideas. We'll do some of those things a little differently."

Alabama is one of 10 SEC teams to return its starting quarterback: AJ McCarron, a junior whose responsibilities could broaden now that Heisman Trophy finalist Trent Richardson is gone

McCarron showed a steady hand as a first-year starter last season, shining in the Crimson Tide's BCS title game



AJ McCarron
Photo by RD Moore

victory over LSU while making few mistakes (just five interceptions) in the rest of Alabama's games.

Saban has indicated the Crimson Tide could air it out more in 2012 without Richardson in the backfield, but that doesn't mean the system has changed.

"Same as always," McCarron said. "Nothing different. Just some new faces around there."

The new faces in the backfield received plenty of opportunities to shine during the spring, as projected starter Eddie Lacy didn't practice because of a turf toe injury. That allowed bruising back Jalston Fowler, speedy redshirt freshman Dee Hart and early enrollee T.J. Yeldon to shine a bit under the spotlight.

Yeldon, a five-star recruit who flipped his commitment from Auburn at the last minute, left the biggest impression, racking up 179 yards of offense in the A-Day game.

New, promising faces also dot the wide receiving corps. Players such as Kenny Bell, Christion Jones, Kevin Norwood, Chris Black and Amari Cooper all arrived as highly regarded prospects but have yet to have a chance to prove it on the field.

The opposite can be said about the offensive line, which returns four starters who have combined to start 96 games.

The lone new face is left tackle Cyrus Kouandjio, a sophomore who was one of the top-ranked players in the nation out of high school. His presence, coupled with the Tide's vacancy at center, prompted 2011 Outland Trophy winner Barrett Jones to unselfishly switch positions and embrace an even larger leadership role.

"It's about us winning," Jones said. "If that's our best way to win, then I'll play center."

DEFENSE

The best defense in the country will need to reload with the best of them if it hopes to replicate all it accomplished in 2011.

It's a challenge relished by the few remaining starters from last year's championship team and the bevy of talented, yet inexperienced players poised to play a lot in 2012.

"It's definitely not the same team," said senior nose guard Jesse Williams, who started all 13 games last season at defensive end. "But we've reloaded at a lot of positions and have a lot of quality guys waiting behind the guys who are leaving now."

No position group is immune to significant turnover on this Alabama defense, which led the nation in all major statistical categories last season.

Though he's lining up next to senior Damion Square, Williams has Ed Stinson, formerly a linebacker, nestled against his other hip. Williams, though, is the key cog; the nose guard

Barrett Jones
Photo by RD Moore

SCOUTING REPORT: Offense

POS	STARTER	YR.	COMMENT	BACKUP/KEY DEPTH
QB	AJ McCarron*	Jr.	Only threw five interceptions last season.	Phillip Sims, So.
RB	Eddie Lacy	Jr.	Sat out spring practice with turf toe injury.	Jalston Fowler, Jr.
WR	Kenny Bell	Jr.	Started four times in 2011.	DeAndrew White, So.
WR	Kevin Norwood	Jr.	78 receiving yards in BCS title game.	Christion Jones, So.
TE	Brian Vogler	So.	Also worked at H-back during the spring.	Harrison Jones, So.
TE	Michael Williams*	Sr.	More career starts (27) than receptions (16).	Malcolm Faciane, Fr.
LT	Cyrus Kouandjio	So.	Only player on O-line without a career start.	Austin Shepherd, So.
LG	Chance Warmack*	Sr.	Has 26 consecutive starts at the position.	Chad Lindsay, So.
C	Barrett Jones*	Sr.	Won 2011 Outland Trophy as a left tackle.	Ryan Kelly, Fr.
RG	Anthony Steen*	Jr.	Missed multiple games in 2011 with a concussion.	Kellen Williams, Jr.
RT	D.J. Fluker*	Jr.	Down to 22 percent body fat.	Issac Luatua, Fr.
K	Jeremy Shelley*	Sr.	Only 3 of 9 from 40-plus yards in his career.	Cade Foster, Jr.

*Returning Starter

SCOUTING REPORT: Defense

POS	STARTER	YR.	COMMENT	BACKUP/KEY DEPTH
DE	Damion Square*	Sr.	Had most TFLs (7.0) in 2011 of any returning player.	Quinton Dial, Sr.
NG	Jesse Williams*	Sr.	Started all 13 games last season at DE.	Brandon Ivory, So.
DE	Ed Stinson	Jr.	Five of 19 tackles in 2011 went for a loss.	Jeoffrey Pagan, So.
LB	C.J. Mosley	Jr.	Ready to emerge as a star.	Tana Patrick, Jr.
LB	Nico Johnson*	Sr.	Has starts in every season at Alabama.	Trey DePriest , So.
LB	Xzavier Dickson	So.	Slowed by an offseason ankle injury during spring.	Jonathan Atchison, Jr.
LB	Adrian Hubbard	So.	Led Tide with three sacks in spring game.	Dillon Lee, Fr.
CB	Dee Milliner	Jr.	Was prominent in nickel and dime packages in 2011.	Travell Dixon, Jr.
CB	Deion Belue	Jr.	JC transfer had excellent spring.	John Fulton, Jr.
SS	Vinnie Sunseri	So.	Scored off fumble recovery, had INT in spring game.	Jarrick Williams, Jr.
FS	Robert Lester*	Sr.	Intercepted 10 passes over the past two seasons.	Ha'Sean Clinton-Dix, So.
P	Cody Mandell*	Jr.	Former walk-on entering third season as the starter.	Adam Griffith, Fr.

*Returning Starter

CRIMSON TIDE RECRUITING 2012 rivals.com

3 NEWCOMERS OF IMPACT

T.J. Yeldon
Yeldon is a 6-2, 216-pounder with the ability to be an every-down back at some point in his Tide career. A five-star prospect who once was committed to Auburn, he not only has a great frame and build, but is extremely fast and incredibly athletic. Look for Yeldon to see a good bit of action this season.

Landon Collins
Collins' pick of Alabama over LSU against his mom's wishes ended a well-publicized recruiting battle. For the Tide, he was worth the effort. Collins isn't the world's biggest safety, but is built like a rock and has the skills to be equally effective against both the pass and the run. He's a true enforcer in the secondary.

Eddie Williams
As hard as this is to believe given that he's a five-star recruit, Williams probably didn't get as much publicity as he deserved during the recruiting process. He's an exceptional talent, and has the athleticism and playmaking skills to line up on either side of the ball. Williams, however, would like to play receiver for the Tide.

THE SLEEPER

Darren Lake
A strong, athletic and explosive defensive tackle, Lake comes from rural Alabama and there wasn't much film of him available. But when he was scouted at the Semper Fidelis All-American Bowl, Lake performed at a very high level, and at times could not effectively be blocked by his opponents. He's surprisingly nimble and moves well for his size.

Committments	26
Average Stars	3.77
★★★★★	3
★★★★☆	14
★★★☆☆	9
★★☆☆☆	0
Total Stars	98
National Rank: 1	SEC: 1

2013 NEEDS: Although Alabama signed a couple of solid offensive tackles in 2012, that position will again be a major point of emphasis during this recruiting cycle. Depth is needed at tackle, and some of the Tide's starters are late in their college careers. If they could grab two or more that would be ideal. Defensive back is another point of emphasis. Look for multiple signees there as well. The same goes for running back. At that spot, Alabama is expected to try to bring in two players for sure, and possibly even three total.

by Keith Niebuhr/rivals.com

Name	Pos	Ht	Wt	Stars	Hometown	School
Ryan Anderson	LB	6-3	250	★★★★	Daphne, AL	Daphne
Rivals100 selection...Rated as the No. 5 prospect in Alabama...Rated as the nation's No. 6 outside linebacker...Selected to compete in the Alabama-Mississippi All-Star Classic.						
Dakota Ball	DT	6-2	292	★★★	Lindale, GA	Pepperell
Rated as the No. 30 prospect in Alabama by Rivals.com...Rated as the nation's No. 29 defensive tackle...Participated in the Under Armour All-American Game.						
Deion Belue	DB	6-0	170	★★★	Booneville, MS	Northeast Mississippi C.C.
Originally signed with Alabama out of Tuscumbia (Ala.) Deshler in 2010...Had 691 return yards in 2011...Enrolled at Alabama in January.						
Chris Black	WR	5-11	170	★★★★	Jacksonville, FL	First Coast
Rivals100 selection...Rated as the No. 11 prospect in Florida...Rated as the nation's No. 8 wide receiver...Participated in the Under Armour All-American Game...Chose Alabama over Florida State.						
Landon Collins	DB	6-0	199	★★★★★	Geismar, LA	Dutchtown
Rivals100 selection...Rated as the No. 1 prospect in Louisiana...Rated as the nation's No. 2 safety...Participated in the Under Armour All-American Game...Had 45 tackles and four interceptions as a senior...Chose Alabama over LSU.						
Amari Cooper	WR	6-1	175	★★★★	Miami, FL	Northwestern
Rivals100 selection... Rated as the No. 8 prospect in Florida...Rated as the nation's No. 6 wide receiver...Participated in the Under Armour All-American Game.						
Denzel Devall	LB	6-2	236	★★★★	Bastrop, LA	Bastrop
Rivals250 selection...Rated as the No. 2 prospect in Louisiana...Rated as the nation's No. 5 inside linebacker...Choose Alabama over LSU.						
Travell Dixon	DB	6-2	200	★★★★	Thatcher, AZ	Eastern Arizona J.C.
Rated as the nation's No. 3 junior college prospect by Rivals.com...Had three interceptions in 2011...Chose Alabama over Florida State.						
Kenyan Drake	RB	6-1	195	★★★★	Powder Springs, GA	Hillgrove
Rivals250 selection...Rated as the No. 14 prospect in Georgia...Rated as the nation's No. 13 running back...Participated In the Offense-Defense All-American Bowl.						
Kurt Freitag	TE	6-3	245	★★★	Buford, GA	Buford
Rated as the No. 29 prospect in Georgia by Rivals.com...Rated as the nation's No. 13 tight end...Chose Alabama over Florida.						
Brandon Greene	OL	6-6	280	★★★★	Ellenwood, GA	Cedar Grove
Rated as the No. 19 prospect in Georgia by Rivals.com...Rated as the nation's No. 33 offensive tackle... Participated in the Under Armour All-American Game.						
Adam Griffith	K	5-11	175	★★★	Calhoun, GA	Calhoun
Rated as the nation's No. 2 kicker by Rivals.com...Made kicks from 29, 32, 36 and 46 yards in state title game, including the game-winner.						
Caleb Gulledge	OL	6-4	255	★★★	Prattville, AL	Prattville
Rated as the No. 25 prospect in Alabama by Rivals.com...Rated as the nation's No. 32 offensive guard... Participated in the Alabama-Mississippi All-Star Classic.						

Name	Pos	Ht	Wt	Stars	Hometown	School
Tyler Hayes	LB	6-3	215	★★★★	Thomasville, AL	Thomasville
Rivals250 selection...Rated as the No. 7 prospect in Alabama...Rated as the nation's No. 12 outside linebacker...Participated in the Alabama-Mississippi All-Star Classic.						
Brandon Hill	OL	6-6	352	★★★	Collierville, TN	St. George's
Rated as the No. 13 prospect in Tennessee by Rivals.com...Rated as the nation's No. 57 offensive tackle...Helped lead St. George's to state title in 2011.						
Cyrus Jones	ATH	5-11	183	★★★★	Baltimore, MD	Gilman School
Rivals100 selection...Rated as the No. 3 prospect in Maryland...Rated as the nation's No. 6 athlete...Participated in the Under Armour All-American Game.						
Korren Kirven	DT	6-4	272	★★★★	Lynchburg, VA	Brookville
Rivals250 selection...Rated as the No. 7 prospect in Virginia...Rated as the nation's No. 16 defensive tackle...Participated in the Under Armour All-American Game.						
Darren Lake	DT	6-3	330	★★★	York, AL	Sumter County
Rated as the No. 20 prospect in Alabama by Rivals.com...Recorded 48 tackles and four sacks as a senior...Chose Alabama over Tennessee.						
Dillon Lee	LB	6-4	220	★★★★	Buford, GA	Buford
Rivals250 selection...Rated as the No. 9 prospect in Georgia...Rated as the nation's No. 4 inside linebacker...Participated in the U.S. Army All-American Bowl.						
Alec Morris	QB	6-3	235	★★★	Allen, TX	Allen
Rated as the nation's No. 30 pro-style quarterback by Rivals.com...Threw for 3,242 yards and 35 touchdowns as a senior.						
Reggie Ragland	LB	6-4	245	★★★★	Madison, AL	Bob Jones
Rivals100 selection...Rated as the No. 4 prospect in Alabama...Rated as the nation's No. 1 inside linebacker...Participated in the Under Armour All-American Game.						
Geno Smith	DB	5-11	180	★★★★	Atlanta, GA	St Pius X School
Rivals100 selection...Rated as the No. 6 prospect in Georgia...Rated as the nation's No. 8 cornerback...Participated in the U.S. Army All-American Bowl.						
Alphonse Taylor	DT	6-6	340	★★★	Mobile, AL	Davidson
Rated as the No. 16 prospect in Alabama by Rivals.com...Rated as the nation's No. 39 defensive tackle...Chose Alabama over Florida State.						
Dalvin Tomlinson	DT	6-2	270	★★★★	McDonough, GA	Henry County
Rivals250 selection...Rated as the No. 11 prospect in Georgia...Rated as the nation's No. 11 defensive tackle...Chose Alabama over Georgia Tech.						
Eddie Williams	ATH	6-4	204	★★★★★	Panama City, FL	Arnold
Rivals100 selection...Rated as the No. 4 prospect in Florida...Rated as the nation's No. 1 athlete...Participated in the Under Armour All-American Game.						
T.J. Yeldon	RB	6-2	216	★★★★★	Daphne, AL	Daphne
Rivals100 selection...Rated as the No. 2 prospect in Alabama...Rated as the nation's No. 2 running back...Participated in the U.S. Army All-American Bowl...Participated in the Alabama-Mississippi All-Star Classic...Chose Alabama over Auburn.						

CRIMSON TIDE SPRING ROSTER

No.	Name	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.	Hometown
7	Ryan Anderson	LB	6-2	252	Fr.	Daphne
19	Jonathan Atchison	LB	6-3	236	Jr.	Atlanta, GA
87	Parker Barrineau	WR	6-0	175	So.	Northport
7	Kenny Bell	WR	6-1	180	Jr.	Rayville, LA
13	Deion Belue	DB	5-11	179	Jr.	Tuscambia
31	Jerrod Bierbower	DB	6-1	185	So.	Dublin, OH
5	Chris Black	WR	5-11	178	Fr.	Jacksonville, FL
93	Chris Bonds	DL	6-4	273	Jr.	Columbia, SC
22	Hunter Bush	DB	5-11	195	Sr.	Wetumpka
21	Brent Calloway	LB	6-1	217	Fr.	Russellville
26	Caleb Castille	DB	5-11	170	So.	Birmingham
6	Ha'Sean Clinton-Dix	DB	6-1	209	So.	Orlando, FL
18	Levi Cook	DB	5-10	190	Sr.	Decatur
9	Amari Cooper	WR	6-1	198	Fr.	Miami, FL
33	Trey DePriest	LB	6-2	245	So.	Springfield, OH
90	Quinton Dial	DL	6-6	304	Sr.	Pinson
55	Josh Dickerson	LB	6-1	238	So.	Evans, GA
47	Xzavier Dickson	LB	6-3	262	So.	Griffin, GA
9	Travell Dixon	DB	6-1	191	Jr.	Miami, FL
98	Dillon Drake	K	5-9	175	So.	Fort Walton Beach, FL
40	Spencer Duncan	RB	6-2	230	So.	Birmingham
19	Dustin Ellison	QB	6-0	180	So.	Monroeville
12	Phillip Ely	QB	6-1	198	Fr.	Tampa, FL
85	Malcolm Faciane	TE	6-5	259	Fr.	Picayune, MS
44	LaMichael Fanning	DL	6-7	298	Fr.	Hamilton, GA
76	D.J. Fluker	OL	6-6	335	Jr.	Foley
43	Cade Foster	PK	6-1	218	Jr.	Southlake, TX
45	Jalston Fowler	RB	6-1	242	Jr.	Mobile
10	John Fulton	DB	6-0	187	Jr.	Manning, SC
48	Rowdy Harrell	LB	6-0	221	Sr.	Moundville
1	Dee Hart	RB	5-9	190	Fr.	Orlando, FL
21	Ben Howell	RB	5-9	194	Sr.	Gordo
42	Adrian Hubbard	LB	6-6	248	So.	Lawrenceville, GA
62	Brandon Ivory	DL	6-4	315	So.	Memphis, TN
31	Kelly Johnson	TE	6-3	230	Sr.	Bluffton, SC
35	Nico Johnson	LB	6-3	245	Sr.	Andalusia
57	Aaron Joiner	OL	6-2	265	Sr.	Florence
75	Barrett Jones	OL	6-5	302	Sr.	Germantown, TN
22	Christion Jones	WR	5-11	185	So.	Adamsville
82	Harrison Jones	TE	6-4	244	So.	Germantown, TN
70	Ryan Kelly	OL	6-5	288	Fr.	West Chester, OH
48	Tommy Keys	FB	6-2	235	So.	West Point, MS
77	Arie Kouandjio	OL	6-5	310	So.	Hyattsville, MD
71	Cyrus Kouandjio	OL	6-6	311	So.	Hyattsville, MD
42	Eddie Lacy	RB	6-0	220	Jr.	Geismar, LA
25	Dillon Lee	LB	6-4	240	Fr.	Buford, GA
37	Robert Lester	DB	6-2	210	Sr.	Foley
78	Chad Lindsay	OL	6-2	290	So.	The Woodlands, TX
51	Wilson Love	DL	6-3	281	Fr.	Mountain Brook
68	Issac Luatua	OL	6-2	313	Fr.	La Mirada, CA
29	Cody Mandell	P	6-4	202	Jr.	Lafayette, LA
24	Nathan McAlister	WR	5-11	165	Sr.	Russellville
10	AJ McCarron	QB	6-4	210	Jr.	Mobile
47	Cory McCarron	TE	6-2	240	So.	Mobile
28	Dee Milliner	DB	6-1	199	Jr.	Millbrook
56	William Ming	DL	6-3	283	Jr.	Athens
23	Taylor Morton	DB	5-11	185	So.	Centreville
32	C.J. Mosley	LB	6-2	232	Jr.	Theodore
39	Bryson Moultry	DB	6-0	185	So.	Jacksonville, FL
64	Michael Newsome	DL	6-2	250	So.	Cockeysville, MD
83	Kevin Norwood	WR	6-2	195	Jr.	D'Iberville, MS
46	Michael Nysewander	TE	6-1	230	So.	Hoover
53	Anthony Orr	DL	6-4	258	So.	Madison
34	Tyler Owens	LB	6-0	220	So.	Columbiana
8	Jeoffrey Pagan	DL	6-4	285	So.	Asheville, NC
2	Tana Patrick	LB	6-3	236	Jr.	Bridgeport
27	Nick Perry	DB	6-1	208	Jr.	Prattville
57	D. J. Pettway	DL	6-2	285	Fr.	Pensacola, FL
17	Parker Philpot	DB	5-10	180	Jr.	Alpharetta, GA
33	Marcus Polk	WR	5-8	180	So.	Lithonia, GA
54	Russell Raines	OL	6-2	277	Jr.	Satsuma
13	Ty Reed	QB	6-1	190	Jr.	Rocky Hill, CT
90	Jeremy Shelley	PK	5-10	165	Sr.	Raleigh, NC
79	Austin Shepherd	OL	6-5	312	So.	Buford, GA
80	Marvin Shinn	WR	6-3	198	Fr.	Prichard
6	Blake Sims	RB	6-0	212	So.	Gainesville, GA
92	Damion Square	DL	6-3	286	Sr.	Houston, TX
61	Anthony Steen	OL	6-3	303	Jr.	Lambert, MS
49	Ed Stinson	DL	6-4	282	Jr.	Homestead, FL
3	Vinnie Sunseri	DB	6-0	215	So.	Tuscaloosa
16	Bradley Sylve	WR	5-11	178	Fr.	Port Sulphur, LA
50	Alphonse Taylor	DL	6-5	340	Fr.	Mobile
52	MK Taylor	LS	5-10	210	Jr.	Oxford
51	Carson Tinker	SN	6-1	220	Sr.	Murfreesboro, TN
84	Brian Vogler	TE	6-7	258	So.	Columbus, GA
65	Chance Warmack	OL	6-3	320	Sr.	Atlanta, GA
23	Jabriel Washington	DB	5-11	183	Fr.	Jackson, TN
11	Ranzell Watkins	DB	5-9	172	Jr.	Charlotte, NC
2	DeAndrew White	WR	6-0	185	So.	Houston, TX
46	Wilson Whorton	P	5-10	175	So.	Leeds
60	Matt Wilkinson	LS		205	So.	Plantation, FL
20	Jarrick Williams	DB	6-1	212	Jr.	Mobile
54	Jesse Williams	DL	6-4	320	Sr.	Brisbane, Australia
63	Kellen Williams	OL	6-3	303	Jr.	Lawrenceville, GA
89	Michael Williams	TE	6-6	269	Sr.	Reform
9	Nick Williams	WR	5-10	185	Jr.	Fort Lauderdale, FL
81	Danny Woodson, Jr.	WR	6-1	195	Fr.	Mobile
4	T.J. Yeldon	RB	6-2	216	Fr.	Daphne

INDIVIDUAL STATS

PASSING

	GP	Effic	Cmp	Att	Int	Pct	Yards	TD	Long	Avg/G
AJ McCarron	13	147.3	219	328	5	66.8	2634	16	69	202.6
P. Sims	8	98.9	18	28	2	64.3	163	0	19	20.4

RECEIVING

	GP	No.	Yards	Avg	TD	Long	Avg/G
M. Maze	13	56	627	11.2	1	69	48.2
B. Smelley	13	34	356	10.5	4	35	27.4
T. Richardson	13	29	338	11.7	3	61	26.0

RUSHING

	GP	Att	Gain	Loss	Net	Avg	TD	Long	Avg/G
T. Richardson	13	283	1740	61	1679	5.9	21	76	129.2
E. Lacy	12	95	694	20	674	7.1	7	67	56.2
J. Fowler	13	56	395	10	385	6.9	4	69	29.6

DEF. LEADERS

Tackles: D. Hightower 85, M. Barron 68, C. Upshaw 52
Tackles for loss: C. Upshaw 18, D. Hightower 11, D. Square 7
Sacks: C. Upshaw 9.5, M. Gentry 4.5, D. Hightower 4
Interceptions: D. Milliner 3, M. Barron 2, R. Lester 2

NOTEBOOK

One of the prizes from Alabama's 2011 signing class is now playing at his third position.

Brent Calloway, who infamously flopped back and forth between Auburn and Alabama before eventually signing with the Crimson Tide, started his career at running back. He never saw the field as a true freshman and his prospects weren't great for the near future, either, so he started the spring at linebacker.

Midway through spring ball, Calloway was back on offense, but this time at tight end/H-back, a position that has been incredibly valuable to Alabama's offensive attack over the past few seasons.

"He's just trying to adapt right now, but everything is going really well for him," tight end **Brian Vogler** said. "He brings speed to the position, which never hurts, just learning the formations and the plays, and he'll be a really good player for us."

Calloway has one less player to worry about on the depth chart, as senior **Brandon Lewis** left the program shortly after the conclusion of spring football.

• Also on the move this spring was early enrollee **Alphonse Taylor**. The 340-pounder started out at nose guard, but was flipped to offense at the same time as Calloway. He will enter the fall as a reserve offensive guard.

"The decisions about where those guys end up playing will be made as we gather information about how they do," coach **Nick Saban** said. "Then we'll be able to make a better assessment of what the best position is and what role that they have on the team really is."

• Backup quarterback Phillip Sims wasn't able to throw the ball much throughout the spring because of a strained muscle in his throwing shoulder, and then announced he would transfer in late April.

"The reason for me leaving is nothing more than a personal matter," Sims said in a university press release. "I just need to be closer to home to support my family at this time and that needs to be my priority right now. I would still like to continue my football career, and hopefully I can do that and also be there for my family."

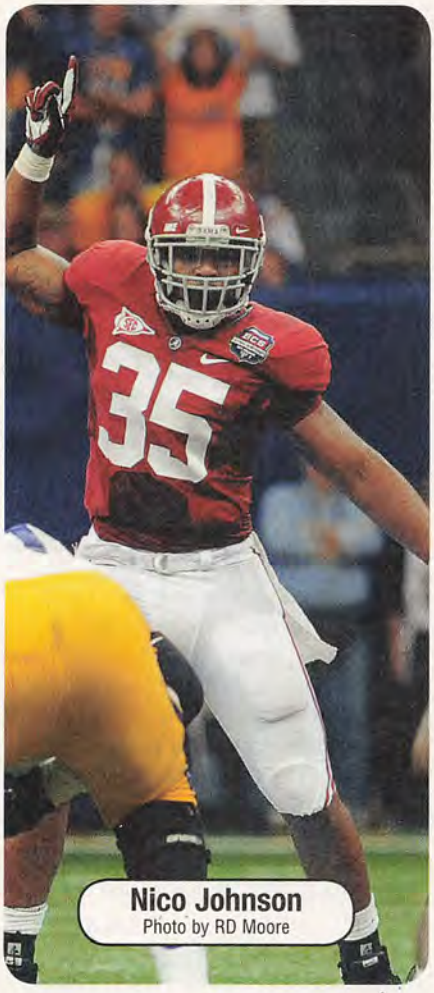
Freshman Phillip Ely moved up to the No. 2 spot. The Tampa, Fla. product was redshirted last year.

OPPOSING COACHES VIEW

• **On Alabama's quest to repeat:** "Alabama has stockpiled players. The talent drop-off after the second national championship won't be as drastic a difference as it was after the first national championship simply because of the recruiting process is in Nick Saban's fifth year. The biggest change, quite frankly, is going to be in Saban's new offensive coordinator, the marriage of the new offensive coordinator learning to coordinate a system that is Saban's."

• **On new players on defense:** "(Sophomore) Vinnie Sunseri is one of the top five to seven players on Alabama's team. He's a hybrid linebacker playing strong safety. He's a football player."

• **On the running game:** (Freshman) T.J. Yeldon ran through Alabama's defense (in the spring game) like crap through a goose. He broke his hand in three places this spring, put a pad and screws in his hand and didn't miss a practice rep."



Nico Johnson
Photo by RD Moore

in Alabama's defense has consistently plugged the middle and freed the team's linebackers to make plays.

Williams likely won't see his statistics jump — former players Terrence Cody and Josh Chapman rarely put up big numbers — but his value to the team has surely increased.

At linebacker, replacing Courtney Upshaw and Dont'a Hightower won't be as simple as plugging two new players into their positions and moving on.

Sophomore Adrian Hubbard appears to be the most promising player to replace Upshaw at the Jack linebacker position, but he also could flip to Sam, a position occupied by Jerrell Harris over the past two seasons.

Xzavier Dickson also will likely fill in somewhere on the outside, while senior Nico Johnson, junior C.J. Mosley and sophomore Trey DePriest will try to replace Hightower's quantifiable (166 tackles over the past two seasons) and intangible (two-time team captain) qualities.

Safety Robert Lester, who has 10 interceptions over the past two seasons, is the lone returning starter in the secondary. As has been customary on a Saban defense, the Crimson Tide will fill the remaining three spots with a rotating cast of about six players, whose playing time will be directly correlated with their strengths and how they mesh with coordinator Kirby Smart's numerous defensive back sets.

Cornerbacks John Fulton, Dee Milliner, Deion Belue and Travell Dixon all should see significant playing time. The same can be said for safeties Vinnie Sunseri and Ha'Sean "Ha Ha" Clinton-Dix, both of whom have seen their responsibilities enhanced now that two-time captain Mark Barron is in the NFL.

"Whoever wants to play winning football," Hubbard said, "those will be the playmakers."

SPECIAL TEAMS

Cade Foster and Jeremy Shelley combined to miss four field goals in Alabama's regular-season loss to LSU. Shelley redeemed himself by making five in the Crimson Tide's national championship victory, but he also missed two others and an extra point.

Cody Mandell, after a sophomore season marred by inconsistency, drew plenty of praise from Saban through-

BEST & BRIGHTEST

MOST VALUABLE PLAYER

C Barrett Jones

He's playing his third position since enrolling at Alabama, taking over for center William Vlachos while talented sophomore Cyrus Kouandjio tries to fill the void at left tackle. ... Won the 2011 Outland Trophy, was a unanimous first-team All-American and took home numerous other awards. ... Played right guard as a freshman and sophomore. ... Has helped clear the way for Heisman Trophy winner Mark Ingram and Heisman Trophy finalist Trent Richardson.

EMERGING STAR

LB Adrian Hubbard

Had four tackles for loss, including three sacks, en route to winning Dwight Stephenson Lineman of the Game award at Alabama's spring game. ... Former basketball star has added 25 pounds to frame since signing with Crimson Tide. ... Blessed with natural pass-rushing instincts, can play at either outside linebacker position in Alabama's 3-4 defense. ... Considers former Alabama LBs Courtney Upshaw and Jerrell Harris to be key in aiding his development. ... Had nine tackles in nine games last season.

TOP NEWCOMER

RB T.J. Yeldon

A true freshman who enrolled early and participated in spring practice. ... Considered by Nick Saban as a running back who can "do it all." ... A five-star recruit who flipped commitment from Auburn to Alabama at last minute. ... Ran for 88 yards, caught five passes for 91 yards and a touchdown in Tide's spring game. ... Among a group of running backs challenging Eddie Lacy for starting spot.

2009 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	32.1	22
Rushing	215.1	12
Passing	187.9	92
Total	403.0	42
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	11.7	2
Rushing	78.1	2
Passing	166.0	10
Total	244.1	2
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 19	+ 1.36	4

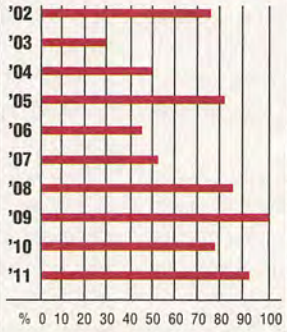
2010 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	35.7	18
Rushing	182.9	29
Passing	261.2	27
Total	444.1	22
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	13.5	3
Rushing	110.2	10
Passing	176.2	13
Total	286.4	5
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 12	+ 0.92	11

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	34.9	20
Rushing	214.5	16
Passing	215.2	69
Total	429.6	31
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	8.2	1
Rushing	72.2	1
Passing	111.5	1
Total	183.6	1
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 8	+ 0.62	23

10-YEAR WINNING TREND

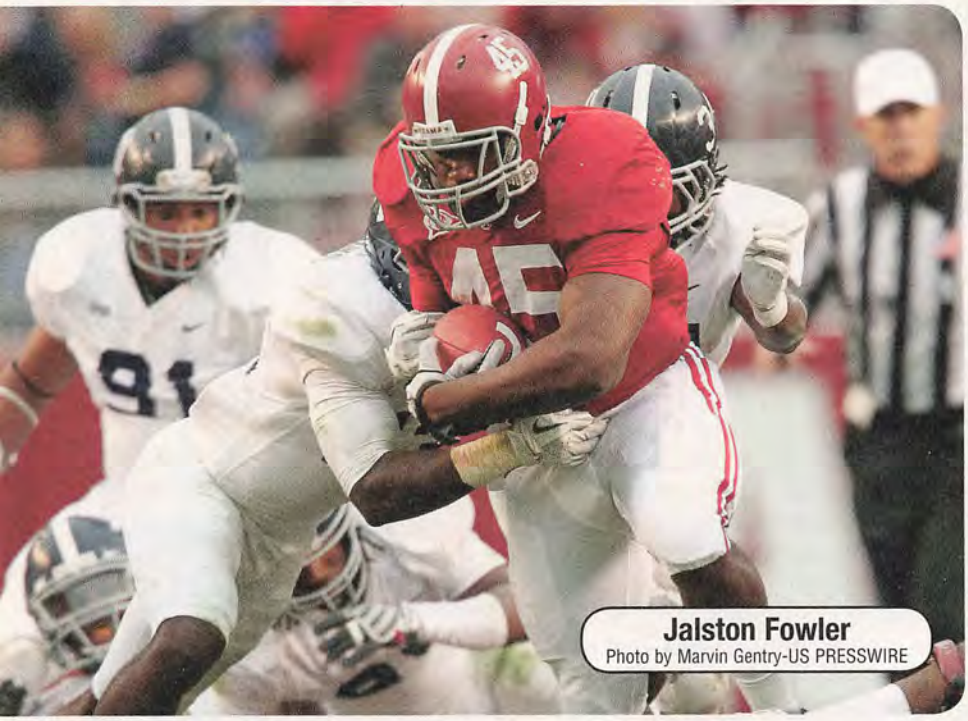


RESULTS

12-1, 8-1

W	KENT STATE	48-7
W	at Penn State	27-11
W	NORTH TEXAS	41-0
W	ARKANSAS	38-14
W	at Florida	38-10
W	VANDERBILT	34-0
W	at Mississippi	52-7
W	TENNESSEE	37-6
L	LSU (OT)	6-9
W	at Mississippi State	24-7
W	GEORGIA SOUTHERN	45-21
W	at Auburn	42-14
	BCS National Championship Game	
W	vs. LSU	21-0

PLAYER PROFILE



Jalston Fowler
Photo by Marvin Gentry-US PRESSWIRE

Bruiser Gives Tide Power in Backfield

Jalston Fowler knows his role out of the Alabama backfield likely won't involve carrying the ball 15 or 20 times per game, and he's OK with that. There might not be anything the 6-1, 242-pound junior loves more than running over his exhausted competition.

"Those guys are great. They have speed. They're going to bruise you up," Fowler said of the running backs who may have more carries than him in 2012. "I come in and I'm going to bruise you up a lot more. I know they're tired."

With Trent Richardson gone to the NFL and Eddie Lacy out because of turf toe, Fowler took on a new role with the Crimson Tide this spring. Because of his experience edge, Fowler was the de facto No. 1 running back, lining up ahead of younger players such as redshirt freshman Dee Hart and early enrollee T.J. Yeldon.

Running behind Richardson and Lacy in 2011, Fowler still got his fair share of touches. Seeing the field primarily during mop-up duty, he ran for 385 yards and four touchdowns.

"When I see (the hole) open up, I just press it and burst through like Coach (Burton) Burns has been telling me the whole spring," Fowler said. "When I get myself going, I don't feel like anyone can catch me from behind unless we have a really long distance to go."

In the race up Alabama's running back depth chart, Fowler likely will be caught by Lacy, who has combined to run for more than 1,000 yards over the past two seasons, and a promising player such as Yeldon, who was the star player at Alabama's end-of-spring scrimmage.

Fowler, though, won't be left with nothing to do.

"We're going to use him the ways that he's most effective," coach Nick Saban said.

"He is a good receiver; he's a good blocker. He has demonstrated that he runs the ball well with his pads pointed north and south. That doesn't mean he doesn't have some ability to cut and make people miss. He does. He's probably got better speed than people think."

Don't get Saban wrong. Fowler's speed is deceiving, but his power is what Alabama will need.

"If you're a power pitcher and you get 26 outs throwing fastballs, you ought not lose the game in the bottom of the ninth throwing a changeup," Saban said. "Jalston Fowler is what he is. He's a big guy who's hard to tackle and people don't like to tackle him." out the spring and received one of the team's Most Improved Player awards.

Replacing Marquis Maze, the Crimson Tide's dynamo on punt and kickoff returns, could be as simple as a one-for-one swap with sophomore wide receiver Christion Jones, who showed promise at the positions during the spring. Running back Dee Hart and cornerbacks Deion Belue and Dee Milliner could also see work on returns.

SCHEDULE ANALYSIS

The Rematch falls at a similar spot on the schedule. It's up to the Crimson Tide to get to the first week of November unscathed before traveling to Death Valley on Nov. 3 to face LSU for the third time in two seasons.

Alabama will know early whether it has a team capable of making the kind of runs it did in 2009 and 2011. For its season opener, Alabama will be in Dallas, where it will face Michigan, a *Lindy's* preseason Top 10 team. Two weeks later, the Crimson Tide will be in Arkansas to face a Razorback team that, despite the offseason mess involving former coach Bobby Petrino, is considered a national title contender.

Conference expansion worked to Alabama's advantage this season, as it avoids Georgia, South Carolina and Florida from the SEC East. On Oct. 13, Alabama will be the first SEC West team to face new SEC member Missouri on the Tigers' home field.

— Andrew Gribble

SCHEDULE

Date	Opponent	'11 Record
Sept. 1	vs. Michigan (Arlington, TX)	11-2
Sept. 8	WESTERN KENTUCKY	7-5
Sept. 15	at Arkansas	11-2
Sept. 22	FAU	1-11
Sept. 29	OLE MISS	2-10
Oct. 13	at Missouri	8-5
Oct. 20	at Tennessee	5-7
Oct. 27	MISSISSIPPI STATE	7-6
Nov. 3	at LSU	13-1
Nov. 10	TEXAS A&M	7-6
Nov. 17	WESTERN CAROLINA	1-10
Nov. 24	AUBURN	8-5

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ARKANSAS RAZORBACKS

For more coverage of the Razorbacks, visit arkansas.rivals.com

OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Paul Petrino **DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Paul Haynes** **STADIUM: Reynolds Razorback Stadium: 72,000**

AT A GLANCE

2011:
11-2, 6-2 SEC (3rd, West)

COACH:
John L. Smith — At Arkansas, 1st year; overall: 132-86, 18 years

RETURNING STARTERS:
17; 8 offense, 7 defense, punter, kicker

PLAYERS TO WATCH:
QB Tyler Wilson, RB Knile Davis, WR Cobi Hamilton, WR Marquel Wade, TE Chris Gragg, OG Alvin Bailey, DT Robert Thomas, LB Alonzo Highsmith, LB Tenarius Wright

PRIMARY STRENGTHS:
Arkansas has a super skill set with Heisman Trophy candidates at quarterback and running back, great receivers and two on the offensive line who could threaten for All-America honors. The Razorbacks averaged nearly 37 points last season and should be primed for more in 2012.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS:
No getting around this: Arkansas lost one of the country's best offensive minds, but had no choice as head coach Bobby Petrino's ridiculous, contract-voiding conduct was beyond repair. How the team reacts to that in the fall is anybody's guess. On the field, the Hogs are shaky at offensive tackle and suspect in the secondary.

KEY LOSSES:
WR/PR Joe Adams, WR Jarius Wright, WR Greg Childs, OT Grant Freeman, OG Grant Cook, DE Jake Bequette, MLB Jerry Franklin, OLB Jerico Nelson, FS Tramain Thomas

OVERVIEW:
They won't miss Bobby Petrino's baggage, but the Hogs are bound to miss his offensive mind and the tone-setting work ethic. Successor John L. Smith doesn't have an easy road because fan expectations of competing for a national championship soar, even with Petrino fired. Defense was a strength at the Cotton Bowl, but still must improve for Arkansas to crack through the LSU/Alabama barrier.

A Fine Mess, But Some Damn Fine Pieces

For a while — which already seems like forever ago — Arkansas' biggest spring drama was that its best returning linebacker suffered a weight room injury the night before the start of spring practice.

But senior Alonzo Highsmith will be back and ready to go in August.

Coach Bobby Petrino will not.

That storyline became the headline news of the college football spring, with Petrino fired with cause on April 10. He was replaced nearly two weeks later, on a one-year interim basis, by former assistant John L. Smith, who left his head coaching job at Weber State, his alma mater, after about five months on the job.

The whirlwind began with what was reported to Arkansas athletic director Jeff Long to be Petrino's one-person motorcycle accident that broke four ribs and injured his neck on April 1. Petrino confessed to Long minutes before the April 5 police report was made public that he had been accompanied by Jessica Dorrell.

Petrino, 51 and married, further confessed to having an "inappropriate relationship" with the 25-year-old Dorrell, who had been hired March 28 to Petrino's staff as a student-athlete development coordinator, a job that paid $55,000 per year.

Dorrell's hiring was "a concealed and unfair advantage," Long said, violated UA policy and led to Petrino's exit — as did the coach repeatedly lying about the accident's circumstances.

And, thus, ended the Arkansas tenure of Petrino, who spent four seasons with the Hogs. He went 5-7 in his first year with an undermanned team, then 8-5, 10-3 and 11-2. The buzz this season was about a run at the national championship ... or at least an SEC West title, which pretty much means the same thing these days.

Though their coach was fired halfway through the spring, the Razorbacks bonded and practiced well under offensive coordinator Paul Petrino, defensive coordinator Paul Haynes and linebackers coach Taver Johnson, the acting head coach.

Two days after spring ball, Arkansas welcomed back Smith, who was Arkansas' positively energetic special teams coordinator from 2009 through December 2011 before leaving for Weber State. The Petrino brothers and Haynes previously had worked with Smith during his head coaching days at Idaho, Utah State, Louisville and Michigan State.

Arkansas hired Smith, 63, on a 10-month agreement, providing some semblance of stability while Long continues searching for a permanent coach.

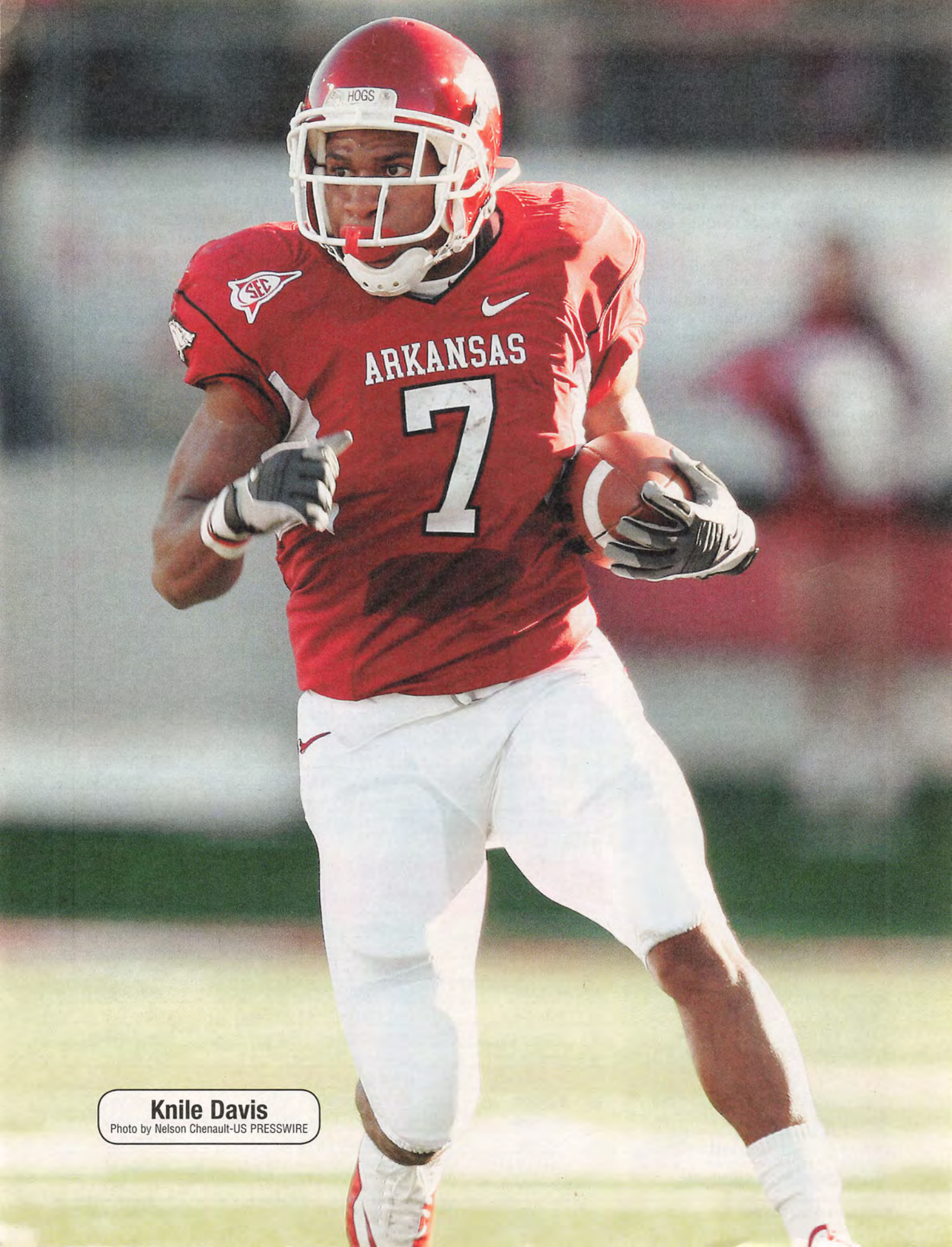
Smith returns with a thorough knowledge of the personnel and systems, easing the concerns of players, who didn't want an "outsider" leading the team.

"It would be tough to bring a new coach in," quarterback Tyler Wilson said. "Just because it's new on everybody. It's a quick turnaround learning the system and all that."

OFFENSE

Even without the mind of fired coach Bobby Petrino, the offense should remain one of the best in the nation, led by an All-SEC quarterback, a healthy 2010 All-SEC running back and receivers and tight ends who are reminiscent of recently graduated greats.

Quarterback Tyler Wilson completed 277 of 438 passes for 3,638 yards, with 24 touchdowns and only six interceptions last fall. Receivers Cobi Hamilton and Marquel Wade, and tight end Chris Gragg, kept excelling through spring practice after Petrino was fired. Run-



Knile Davis
Photo by Nelson Chenault-US PRESSWIRE

ning back Knile Davis continues healing from the broken ankle that sidelined him through the 2011 season.

Even without Davis, Arkansas went 11-2 in 2011 with Dennis Johnson and Ronnie Wingo as the running backs. They return as seniors.

"They are great backs," Wilson said.

But a healthy Davis, who rushed for 1,322 yards and 13 touchdowns in 2010, is one of a kind.

"When Knile is back there, it's especially a spark for us," Wilson said. "You know it's got a chance to go the distance every time. Knile is a difference maker."

After the 2010 season, Arkansas lost Mackey Award winning tight end D.J. Williams to the Green Bay Packers. After last season, senior receivers Joe Adams, Greg Childs and Jarius Wright moved on to the NFL.

Wilson kept on target with succeeding targets. Gragg, who had 41 catches for 518 yards and three touchdowns, and Hamilton (34 for 542 yards, four touchdowns) were third and fourth on the team in receptions last season. They were Wilson's obvious go-to guys this spring. Wilson also formed a rapport with Wade, a sophomore who is like Adams in that he can maneuver a short pass into a huge gain.

"Marquel could be really special," Wilson said.

Senior fullback Kiero Small commands big respect as the dirty-work blocking back.

"Kiero is probably one of my favorite players on the team," Wilson said. "He's got that 'it' factor. He is going to lay the wood on some people."

Creating depth was the explanation that All-SEC offensive guard Alvin Bailey ran behind sophomore Luke Charpentier throughout the spring. It certainly will create depth, with Bailey determined to bounce back and Charpentier not willing to surrender his first-team spot.

Fifth-year senior Tyler Deacon is another guard hungry to start. Junior center Travis Swanson, a two-year starter, is one of the SEC's best.

Tackle gets dicey. Senior Jason Peacock, a returning starter, got demoted to second team for disciplinary reasons in the spring and was supplanted by former walk-on David Hurd. Sophomore Brey Cook, weakened late last season by mononucleosis, needs a strong summer.

DEFENSE

Two days into spring practice Arkansas' best defensive end became its best linebacker.

The Razorbacks lost Jerry Franklin to graduation and the other starting inside linebacker, Alonzo Highsmith, was injured lifting weights the night before spring drills began. So, defensive end Tenarius Wright, a fifth-year senior, moved from end to linebacker

Eric Bennett
Photo by John Williamson

SCOUTING REPORT: Offense

POS	STARTER	YR.	COMMENT	BACKUP/KEY DEPTH
QB	Tyler Wilson*	Sr.	Looked even better in spring after an All-SEC fall.	Brandon Mitchell, Jr.
RB	Knile Davis*	Jr.	2010 All-SEC RB is back to slash through defenses.	Dennis Johnson, Sr.*
WR	Cobi Hamilton*	Sr.	He's the last one left from 2009-2011 Fab Four WRs.	Keante Minor, So.
WR	Marquel Wade	So.	Could pick up where Joe Adams left off.	Julian Horton Jr.
WR	Javontee Herndon	Jr.	Averaged 17.1 yards per catch last year.	Maudrecus Humphrey, Jr.
TE	Chris Gragg*	Sr.	Caught 41 passes last season; will surpass that in 2012.	Austin Tate, Jr.
LT	David Hurd	Jr.	First-team in spring while incumbent was disciplined.	Jason Peacock, Sr.*
LG	Tyler Deacon	Sr.	Fifth-year man gets his chance.	Mitch Smothers, So.
C	Travis Swanson*	Jr.	Leader of the line and one of the nation's best.	Mitch Smothers, So.
RG	Alvin Bailey*	Jr.	Usurped in the spring, but this All-SEC OL will start.	Luke Charpentier, So.
RT	Brey Cook	So.	Wasn't ready last year; needs to be now.	Chris Stringer, So.
K	Zach Hocker*	Jr.	Made 21 of 27 FGs last year with a 50-yarder.	Cameron Bryan, Sr.

*Returning Starter

SCOUTING REPORT: Defense

POS	STARTER	YR.	COMMENT	BACKUP/KEY DEPTH
DE	Trey Flowers	So.	Was a sometimes-starter last year as injury replacement.	Austin Flynn, Jr.
DT	Byran Jones*	Jr.	Had 47 tackles while starting every game in 2012.	D.D. Jones, Sr.
DT	Robert Thomas*	Jr.	Should have havoc-wreaking potential this year.	Alfred Davis, Sr.
DE	Chris Smith	Jr.	Was also a 2011 starter when starters ailed.	Colton Miles-Nash, Sr.
LB	Ross Rasner	Sr.	Could also be the first-team strong safety.	Matt Marshall, Sr.
LB	Tenarius Wright*	Sr.	His move from DE to MLB will be key for Hogs.	Braylon Mitchell, So.
LB	Alonzo Highsmith*	Sr.	Had 80 tackles, 12.5 for loss, last season.	Austin Jones, Jr.
CB	Darius Winston*	Sr.	Last chance to fulfil five-star HS rating.	Kaelon Kelleybrew, Sr.
CB	Tevin Mitchel*	So.	True freshman starter last year.	Davyon McKinney, Fr.
SS	Jerry Mitchell	Jr.	His role is iffy, considering Rasner could play here.	Alan Turner, So.
FS	Eric Bennett*	Jr.	Is adept at either safety position.	Rohan Gaines, Fr.
P	Dylan Breeding*	Sr.	Averaged 45.3 yards with 16 inside the 20.	Zach Hocker, Jr.

*Returning Starter

RAZORBACKS RECRUITING 2012

rivals.com

3 NEWCOMERS OF IMPACT

Jonathan Williams
A Rivals250 prospect, Williams was an outstanding pickup by Arkansas at the running back position. At 5-11, 205 pounds, he possesses everydown back size. Not only is Williams big physically, he has sub-4.5 speed in the 40, making him a legitimate big-play threat. This is a top-level talent who could contribute early in Fayetteville.

Darius Philon
Philon was a longtime Alabama commit, but after being asked to grayshirt, he flipped to Arkansas at the last minute. For the Razorbacks, that was a very good thing. Although he isn't the biggest of defensive linemen, Philon is explosive and relentless. He could play either end or tackle in college, and that flexibility should serve him well.

Otha Peters
Peters was a key get. The Razorbacks swiped him away from Tennessee late, which was a major win for the program. Peters, who has the ability to compete for early playing time in Fayetteville, is one of the most physically impressive SEC signees, and is a true sideline-to-sideline guy. He is equally stout against the run and pass.

THE SLEEPER

Brandon Lewis
A defensive end, Lewis probably won't be a sleeper for long. He has an outstanding body, and once he grows into it, he could make an impact on the line at Arkansas. Which end position Lewis plays in college might depend on how much he fills out. Athletically, there is little doubt he is an SEC-type of talent.

Committments	24
Average Stars	3.04
★★★★★	0
★★★★☆	2
★★★☆☆	21
★★☆☆☆	1
Total Stars	73
National Rank: 34	SEC: 12

2013 NEEDS: Going into the 2012 season, Arkansas will have three quarterbacks on scholarship. But with Tyler Wilson being a senior, that position is one of great need to the Razorbacks. Look for Arkansas to sign – or try to sign – two signal callers in this class. Defensive tackle is another need area. Although Philon could end up there, he might be the only member of the 2012 class to play that position. So look for some pickups there.

by Keith Niebuhr/rivals.com

Name	Pos	Ht	Wt	Stars	Hometown	School
Vin Ascolese	LB	6-2	215	★★	North Bergen, NJ	North Bergen
Recorded 134 tackles, 57 tackles for loss, 11 sacks and two interceptions as a senior... Had 90 tackles and five sacks as a junior.						
Cordale Boyd	OL	6-4	290	★★★	Memphis, TN	Ridgeway
Rated as the No. 20 prospect in Tennessee by Rivals.com...Rated as the nation's No. 35 offensive guard.						
Ray Buchanan Jr.	DB	5-11	178	★★★	Suwanee, GA	Peachtree Ridge
Rated as the No. 74 prospect in Georgia by Rivals.com...Rated as the nation's No. 59 cornerback...Son of former NFL cornerback Ray Buchanan.						
Jared Collins	DB	6-0	170	★★★	Tulsa, OK	Booker T. Washington
Rated as the No. 12 prospect in Oklahoma by Rivals.com...Chose Arkansas over Tulsa.						
D'Arthur Cowan	WR	6-3	175	★★★	Olive Branch, MS	Olive Branch
Rated as the No. 8 prospect in Mississippi by Rivals.com...Rated as the nation's No. 64 wide receiver...Chose Arkansas over offers from Alabama, Mississippi State and others.						
Austin Flynn	DE	6-5	260	★★★	Wilmington, CA	Los Angeles Harbor C.C.
Rated as the nation's No. 45 junior college prospect by Rivals.com...Chose Arkansas over offers from Oklahoma, Oregon State and others.						
Keon Hatcher	WR	6-2	205	★★★	Owasso, OK	Owasso
Rated as the No. 5 prospect in Oklahoma by Rivals.com...Rated as the nation's No. 59 wide receiver...Had 100 receptions for 1,610 yards and 20 touchdowns as a senior.						
Eric Hawkins	WR	5-11	172	★★★	Longview, TX	Longview
Caught 41 passes for 956 yards and 12 touchdowns as a senior...Chose Arkansas over TCU.						
Will Hines	DB	6-1	175	★★★	Waco, TX	Waco
Rated as the No. 62 prospect in Texas by Rivals.com...Rated as the nation's No. 32 cornerback...Chose Arkansas over Missouri.						
Nathan Holmes	ATH	6-1	185	★★★	Port Arthur, TX	Port Arthur Memorial
Rated as the nation's No. 61 athlete by Rivals.com...Rushed for 1,300 yards as a senior.						
Taiwan Johnson	DE	6-3	240	★★★	Manvel, TX	Manvel
Rated as the No. 59 prospect in Texas by Rivals.com...Rated as the nation's No. 37 weakside defensive end...Had 86 tackles and 11 sacks as a senior.						
Brandon Lewis	DE	6-5	225	★★★	Memphis, TN	Ridgeway
Rated as the No. 21 prospect in Tennessee by Rivals.com...Had over 100 tackles and 14 sacks as a senior...Chose Arkansas over Ole Miss, Mississippi State and others.						

Name	Pos	Ht	Wt	Stars	Hometown	School
Defonta Lowe	DB	6-3	185	★★★	Bearden, AR	Bearden
Rated as the No. 3 prospect in Arkansas by Rivals.com...Rated as the nation's No. 20 safety.						
MeKale McKay	WR	6-6	192	★★★	Louisville, KY	Moore
Caught 38 passes for 894 yards and 13 touchdowns as a senior ... Will also play for Arkansas basketball team.						
Otha Peters	LB	6-1	221	★★★★	Covington, LA	Covington
Rivals250 selection...Rated as the No. 4 prospect in Louisiana...Rated as the nation's No. 6 inside linebacker...Chose Arkansas over Tennessee.						
Darius Philon	DE	6-1	282	★★★	Prichard, AL	Vigor
Rated as the No. 13 prospect in Alabama by Rivals.com...Rated as the nation's No. 20 strongside defensive end...Had committed to Auburn and Alabama prior to switch to Arkansas.						
Donovan Roberts	RB	6-0	200	★★★	Norman, OK	Norman
Rated as the No. 6 prospect in Oklahoma by Rivals.com...Rated as the nation's No. 32 running back...Rushed for more than 2,000 yards as a junior.						
Jeremy Sprinkle	DE	6-6	210	★★★	White Hall, AR	White Hall
Rated as the No. 7 prospect in Arkansas by Rivals.com...Racked up 73 tackles and 15 sacks in 2010.						
A.J. Turner	LB	6-3	205	★★★	Lepanto, AR	East Poinsett County
Rated as the No. 4 prospect in Arkansas by Rivals.com...Rated as the nation's No. 47 outside linebacker.						
Jeremy Ward	OL	6-4	290	★★★	Pottsville, AR	Pottsville
Rated as the No. 5 prospect in Arkansas by Rivals.com...Rated as the nation's No. 30 offensive guard.						
Jonathan Williams	RB	5-11	205	★★★★	Allen, TX	Allen
Rivals250 selection...Rated as the No. 26 prospect in Texas...Rated as the nation's No. 17 running back...Totaled more than 3,200 rushing yards in junior and senior seasons.						
Demetrius Wilson	WR	6-1	175	★★★	Glendale, AZ	Glendale C.C.
Had 45 receptions for 841 yards and 10 touchdowns as a senior... Chose the Razorbacks over offers from Arizona, Arizona State, Tennessee and others.						
JaMichael Winston	DE	6-5	226	★★★	Prichard, AL	Vigor
Rated as the No. 21 prospect in Alabama by Rivals.com...Participated in Alabama-Mississippi All-Star Classic.						
Deatrich Wise	DE	6-5	235	★★★	Carrollton, TX	Hebron
Rated as the No. 67 prospect in Texas by Rivals.com...Rated as the nation's No. 38 weakside defensive end...Chose Arkansas over Vanderbilt and Wake Forest.						

RAZORBACKS SPRING ROSTER

No.	Name	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.	Hometown
13	Brandon Allen	QB	6-3	212	Fr.	Fayetteville
95	Horace Arkadie	DT	6-4	270	Fr.	Irving, TX
99	Lavunce Askew	DT	6-3	290	Sr.	Camden
44	Robert Atiga	LB	6-3	240	Jr.	West Valley City, UT
17	Dakota Baggett	CB	5-8	170	Fr.	Bentonville
67	Alvin Bailey	OG	6-5	312	Jr.	Broken Arrow, OK
68	Austin Beck	OT	6-7	307	Fr.	Nowata, OK
14	Eric Bennett	S	6-0	206	Jr.	Tulsa, OK
63	Devin Bowers	DE	6-1	224	Fr.	Fayetteville
14	Dylan Breeding	P	6-1	211	Sr.	Hoover, AL
62	Nick Brewer	SNP	6-1	221	Sr.	Austin, TX
47	Cameron Bryan	K	5-10	176	Sr.	Oklahoma City, OK
16	Brian Buehner	QB	5-11	195	So.	Louisville, KY
24	Sean Burnette	WR	6-3	176	Fr.	Farmington
26	Alex Cacciarelli	WR	6-0	180	So.	Brentwood, MO
24	Daunte Carr	LB	6-3	224	So.	Gainesville, GA
75	Luke Charpentier	C	6-4	305	So.	River Ridge, LA
30	Bonner Chilton	WR	5-10	155	So.	Little Rock
94	Will Coleman	DE	6-3	253	Jr.	Helena
74	Brey Cook	OT	6-7	308	So.	Springdale
27	Dylan Cruz	RB	5-10	185	Fr.	Helena
53	Alan D'Appollonio	SNP	6-0	201	So.	Phoenix, AZ
59	Marcus Danenhauer	OG	6-5	300	Fr.	Bentonville
51	Alfred Davis	DT	6-1	318	Sr.	College Park, GA
7	Knile Davis	RB	6-0	226	Jr.	Missouri City, TX
66	Adam Deacon	OG	6-1	305	Fr.	Little Rock
76	Tyler Deacon	OG	6-4	300	Sr.	Little Rock
85	Demetrius Dean	TE	6-3	250	Fr.	Fayetteville
28	Kelechi Egbe	S	5-11	182	So.	Plano, TX
84	Ryan Farr	WR	6-1	200	Sr.	Little Rock
22	Kelvin Fisher, Jr.	CB	5-11	190	Fr.	Queen Creek, AZ
86	Trey Flowers	DE	6-4	243	So.	Hunstville, AL
41	Austin Flynn	DE	6-5	260	Jr.	Torrance, CA
48	Drew Folgmann	P	5-10	185	Fr.	Colorado Springs, CO
5	Quinta Funderburk	WR	6-4	200	Fr.	Chesapeake, VA
26	Rohan Gaines	S	5-11	190	Fr.	Bainbridge, GA
58	Ray Gervasi	C	6-2	307	So.	Orinda, CA
46	Tyler Gilbert	LB	6-3	244	So.	Sorrento, LA
32	Drew Gorton	SNP	6-0	190	Fr.	Fayetteville
80	Chris Gragg	TE	6-3	236	Sr.	Warren
57	Jared Green	DT	6-0	315	Sr.	Little Rock
34	Jimmy Gross	RB	5-9	194	Jr.	Dallas, TX
55	Brock Haman	LB	6-3	230	Fr.	Scottsdale, AZ
11	Cobi Hamilton	WR	6-3	209	Sr.	Texarkana, TX
46	Forbes Harris	K	6-1	185	So.	Cordova, TN
43	John Henson	K	5-11	138	So.	Southlake, TX
19	Javontee Herndon	WR	6-1	204	Jr.	Jacksonville, FL
45	Alonzo Highsmith	LB	6-1	233	Sr.	Missouri City, TX
18	Zach Hocker	K	6-0	180	Jr.	Russellville
93	DeMarcus Hodge	DT	6-1	301	Fr.	Monroe, LA
16	Price Holmes	S	6-3	206	Jr.	Batesville
2	Julian Horton	WR	6-1	194	Jr.	Norcross, GA
83	Maudrecus Humphrey	WR	6-3	185	Jr.	Hoover, AL
69	David Hurd	OT	6-6	300	Jr.	West Monroe, LA
96	Jeremiah Jackson	DT	6-3	281	Jr.	Hoover, AL
10	Hunter Jarvis	WR	5-8	171	Jr.	Fairview, TX
33	Dennis Johnson	RB	5-9	213	Sr.	Texarkana
52	Austin Jones	LB	6-2	230	Jr.	Dallas, TX
54	Byran Jones	DT	6-2	312	Jr.	Junction City
92	DeQuinta Jones	DT	6-5	299	Sr.	Bastrop, LA
20	Kaelon Kelleybrew	CB	5-11	180	Sr.	Little Rock
97	Darrell Kelly-Thomas	DE	6-4	230	Fr.	Lufkin, TX
39	Jarrett Lake	LB	6-3	223	Jr.	Jenks, OK
35	Morgan Linton	FB	5-11	240	So.	Lonoke
52	Mitchell Loewen	OT	6-4	285	Fr.	Lahaina, HI
47	Matt Marshall	LB	6-1	230	Sr.	Camden, NJ
18	Davis McElroy	QB	6-4	210	Fr.	Lee's Summit, MO
56	Tevin McElwee	LB	6-3	227	Jr.	Fort Smith
13	Davyon McKinney	CB	6-3	190	Fr.	Forrest City
90	Colton Miles-Nash	DE	6-6	261	Sr.	Sulpher Springs, TX
15	Keante Minor	WR	6-0	205	So.	East St. Louis, IL
8	Tevin Mitchel	CB	6-0	192	So.	Mansfield, TX
17	Brandon Mitchell	QB	6-4	230	Jr.	Amite, LA
10	Braylon Mitchell	LB	6-3	232	So.	Heber Springs
38	Jerry Mitchell	S	6-1	219	Jr.	Mandeville, LA
59	Justin Oates	DE	6-4	246	Fr.	New Market, AL
50	Grady Ollison	OT	6-5	286	Fr.	Malvern
71	Jason Peacock	OT	6-4	305	Sr.	Milledgeville, GA
89	Andrew Peterson	TE	6-6	262	Fr.	Seagoville, TX
50	Ben Poeschl	LB	6-1	220	Fr.	Lee's Summit, MO
30	Houston Pruitt	S	5-11	192	Jr.	Springdale
37	Brandon Pyle	FB	6-2	240	Jr.	Hallsville, TX
35	Ross Rasner	S	6-0	212	Sr.	Waco, TX
29	Eric Redmon	CB	5-9	183	So.	Little Rock
49	Derek Rutten	P	6-2	180	Jr.	Southlake, TX
21	Brad Shearin	FB	6-0	240	So.	Jonesboro
36	Kiero Small	FB	5-10	255	Sr.	Baltimore, MD
42	Chris Smith	DE	6-3	251	Jr.	Mount Ulla, NC
65	Mitch Smothers	OG	6-4	296	So.	Springdale
70	Chris Stringer	OT	6-7	304	So.	Rancho Cucamonga, CA
42	Crawford Sullins	P	6-1	180	Fr.	Arlington, TX
64	Travis Swanson	C	6-5	305	Jr.	Kingwood, TX
87	Austin Tate	TE	6-6	253	Jr.	Harrison
82	Brad Taylor	TE	6-4	224	Jr.	Springdale
98	Robert Thomas	DT	6-3	308	Jr.	Muskogee, OK
27	Alan Turner	S	6-0	212	So.	Junction City
41	Alex Voelzke	TE	6-6	220	Fr.	Longview, TX
1	Marquel Wade	WR	5-11	185	So.	Jacksonville, FL
40	Kody Walker	RB	6-2	240	Fr.	Jefferson City, MO
48	Austin Weese	TE	6-3	225	Fr.	Liberty, MO
49	Brett Weir	TE	6-5	250	Fr.	London, Ontario
61	Jordan White	DE	6-5	265	Fr.	Alma
81	Kane Whitehurst	WR	6-0	175	Fr.	Alpharetta, GA
25	Terrell Williams	LB	6-3	232	Sr.	Tulsa, OK
8	Tyler Wilson	QB	6-3	220	Sr.	Greenwood
20	Ronnie Wingo, Jr.	RB	6-3	231	Sr.	St. Louis, MO
21	Darius Winston	CB	6-0	191	Sr.	West Helena
43	Tenarius Wright	DE	6-2	252	Sr.	Memphis, TN

INDIVIDUAL STATS

PASSING

	GP	Effic	Cmp	Att	Int	Pct	Yards	TD	Long	Avg/G
T. Wilson	13	148.35	277	438	6	63.2	3638	24	68	279.8
B. Mitchell	9	154.26	22	32	1	68.8	271	2	54	30.1

RECEIVING

	GP	No.	Yards	Avg	TD	Long	Avg/G
J. Wright	12	66	1117	16.9	12	68	93.1
J. Adams	13	54	652	12.1	3	67	50.2
C. Gragg	13	41	518	12.6	2	41	39.8

RUSHING

	GP	Att.	Gain	Loss	Net	Avg	TD	Long	Avg/G
D. Johnson	11	106	702	32	670	6.3	3	71	60.9
R. Wingo, Jr.	12	104	494	36	458	4.4	3	29	38.2
B. Green	9	68	280	20	260	3.8	5	40	28.9

DEF. LEADERS

Tackles: J. Franklin 101, T. Thomas 91, A. Highsmith 80
Tackles for loss: A. Highsmith 12.5, J. Bequette 10.5, J. Franklin 10
Sacks: J. Bequette 10, A. Highsmith 4.5, C. Smith 3.5
Interceptions: T. Thomas 5, E. Bennett 3, J. Nelsom 2

NOTEBOOK

Before the Razorbacks took the field for their Red-White spring game, strength coach **Jason Veltkamp** asked quarterback **Tyler Wilson** to address the team.

Acting head coach **Taver Johnson** and the staff nodded their agreement.

Who better to address the squad than the senior captain, who has addressed everything but the outgoing mail since coach Bobby Petrino was dismissed on April 10?

"I told the guys, I am the guy to come to," Wilson said. "Come to me and I will be there for you. I've got your back."

• Though they didn't risk 2010 All-SEC running back **Knile Davis** running with full-contact tackling on the broken ankle that sidelined him in 2011, the Razorbacks had no concerns about his condition following the annual spring strength and speed tests.

Asked about Davis' condition, offensive coordinator **Paul Petrino** replied, "Well, he's the fastest and strongest guy on the team, so I'd say it's pretty darn good."

• Senior walk-on transfer cornerback **Kaelon Kelleybrew** of Mississippi Valley State via Little Rock Central High surprised a lot of folks with outstanding spring practices, culminating in the Red-White game's lone interception. He also broke up two passes and made five tackles for the victorious Red.

Don't count junior starting safety **Eric Bennett** among the startled.

"He hasn't been a surprise to me because I always saw it from when he first got here," Bennett said. "He just had to work his way up the chart. I think he has got a good chance to start because he is a real good corner."

• Defensive coordinator **Paul Haynes** liked the pressure generated by the front four, especially with the most experienced defensive end, **Tenarius Wright**, moved to middle linebacker.

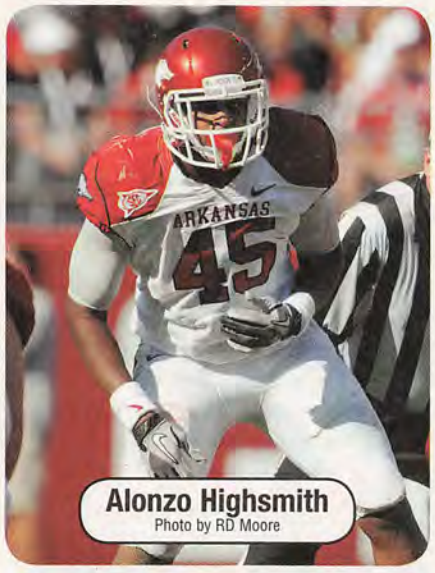
Defensive end **Chris Smith** liked it, too, starting with experienced tackles and backed by Wright and senior starting linebacker **Alonzo Highsmith**, projected to return healthy after injured all spring.

"It all starts up front with guys like (tackles) **Robert Thomas** and **Byran Jones** and **D.D. Jones**," Smith said. "And having Tenarius Wright at linebacker helps out a lot. We get Alonzo Highsmith back (and) it is going to be scary."

OPPOSING COACHES VIEW

• **On the state of the program after the firing of Bobby Petrino:** "This is still a very talented team, coming off a very, very good season, with a lot of momentum. The affect of the head coaching change is not nearly as great as some might think ... The offensive system is still Petrino (Paul), literally. It was a good move to get John L. Smith; they got an experienced head coach that knows the players and knows the program. To be honest with you, I don't think they'll drop off any."

• **A second opinion on the firing of Petrino:** "You've got a lot of unknowns and question marks. That team may rally and circle the wagon and play their ass off, but if they don't have success early, they might fold their tent."



Alonzo Highsmith
Photo by RD Moore

to fill the void.

Always better known to his teammates as "Tank," Wright signed in 2008 as a linebacker and yearned to play there again, even after three fine years at end.

Arkansas should be strong in the middle because Highsmith is expected to be fully recovered from his torn pectoral muscle in fall camp, and team leader Wright more naturally leads from the middle.

"Tank did a great job," defensive coordinator Paul Haynes said. "We need a leader in the middle. Once we get Highsmith back, it'll be even more solidified in there for us."

With the addition of junior college transfer defensive end Austin Flynn this spring, who joined Chris Smith, Trey Flowers and Colton Miles-Nash, the Hogs have enough on the flanks to keep Wright in the middle.

At tackle, regulars Byran Jones and Robert Thomas return. Those juniors are backed up by seniors Alfred Davis and D.D. Jones, as well as fifth-year senior Lavunce Askew, who redshirted last season.

All are solid at least, with Thomas potentially spectacular.

"Our front four, that's going to be probably the heart and soul of our defense without a doubt," said linebackers coach Taver Johnson, who was acting head coach for a couple of weeks.

Senior hybrid Ross Rasner is a leader while playing two positions, the Jack linebacker and strong safety.

There is cringing about a secondary that lost safeties Tramain Thomas and Elton Ford, and cornerbacks Isaac Madison and Greg Gatson.

However, returning senior Darius Winston and sophomore Tevin Mitchel started as much or more than Madison and Gatson on the corners last year, and senior walk-on transfer cornerback Kaelon Kelleybrew, from Mississippi Valley State, ranked among the most pleasant surprises of the spring.

Junior Eric Bennett played ahead of Ford — alongside Thomas — at safety last year. Now it's up to junior Jerry Mitchell to play well enough at strong safety to free Rasner for the Jack linebacker role.

Haynes, hired from Ohio State last December, coordinated Arkansas' defense in the Cotton Bowl victory over Kansas State, using the terminology of former defensive coordinator Willy Robinson.

Now he puts his defense into his own words.

"The guys don't have a problem with the terminology; they don't have a problem with the defense," Haynes said. "Now we've just got to go out and improve."

SPECIAL TEAMS

Arkansas graduated All-American punt returner Joe Adams, but could have the next best facsimile with receiver Marquel Wade as a return man.

Fifth-year senior running back Den-

BEST & BRIGHTEST

MOST VALUABLE PLAYER

QB Tyler Wilson

Arkansas' guardian angel through the spring nightmare of coach Bobby Petrino's fiasco, Wilson led the Razorbacks tangibly and intangibly in the spring after quarterbacking them to an 11-2 season last fall. ... Wilson could have spent the tumultuous spring kicking himself for not declaring for the NFL Draft, but "I am 100 percent a Razorback and there is no going back," Wilson said. ... Emerged last season with 3,638 passing yards in his first season as the starter.

EMERGING STAR

WR Marquel Wade

Even while playing behind seniors Joe Adams, Greg Childs and Jarius Wright last year, Wade flashed signs of stardom. He broke an 85-yard kick return touchdown, ran a reverse 37 yards, and caught eight passes for 62 yards. ... Given some of his spring scrimmages, Wade may surpass his 2011 numbers in the season opener. ... "If you have watched any of the scrimmages, Marquel might be a sleeper. Marquel could be really special," QB Tyler Wilson said.

TOP NEWCOMER

DE Austin Flynn

The junior college transfer arrived in January, his full beard setting him apart among the Razorbacks. ... Flynn fitting in so well so early factored into moving senior starting defensive end Tenarius Wright to fill a gaping hole at middle linebacker. ... The 6-5, 260-pounder from Los Angeles Harbor Junior College played well, allowing Wright to remain in the middle. ... "He has the speed; he has the power," defensive ends coach Steve Caldwell said. "Now he's more comfortable. I'm excited."

2009 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	36.0	9
Rushing	131.8	81
Passing	295.5	10
Total	427.3	20
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	25.1	58
Rushing	152.7	73
Passing	248.5	99
Total	401.2	89
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 15	+ 1.15	6

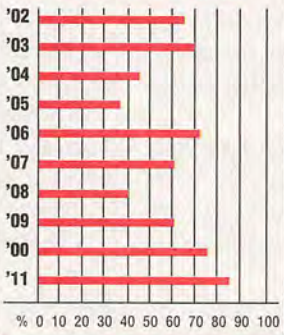
2010 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	36.5	17
Rushing	148.9	69
Passing	333.7	4
Total	482.5	9
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	23.4	47
Rushing	162.6	71
Passing	185.3	20
Total	347.9	36
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 1	+ 0.8	51

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	36.8	15
Rushing	137.4	81
Passing	300.7	13
Total	438.1	29
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	22.2	33
Rushing	167.6	74
Passing	195.2	25
Total	362.9	47
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 1	+ 0.08	49

10-YEAR WINNING TREND

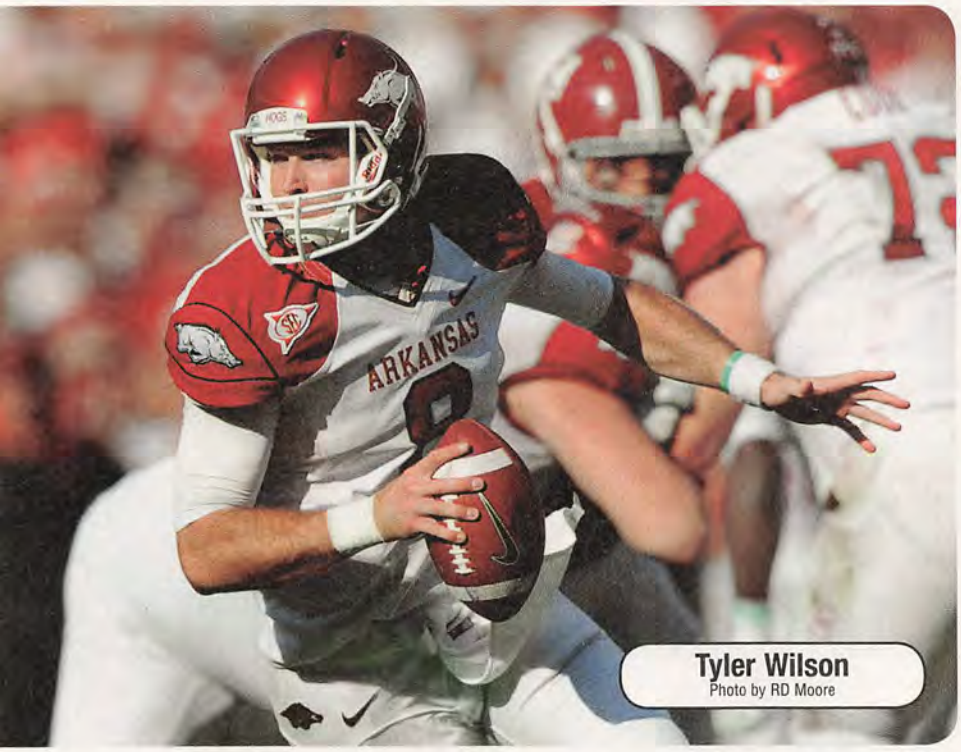


RESULTS

11-2, 6-2

W	MISSOURI STATE	51-7
W	NEW MEXICO	52-3
W	TROY	38-28
L	at Alabama	14-38
W	TEXAS A&M	42-38
W	AUBURN	38-14
W	at Ole Miss	29-24
W	at Vanderbilt	31-28
W	SOUTH CAROLINA	44-28
W	TENNESSEE	49-7
W	MISSISSIPPI STATE	44-17
L	at LSU	17-41
	Cotton Bowl	
W	vs. Kansas State	29-16

PLAYER PROFILE



Tyler Wilson
Photo by RD Moore

Waiting for Superman? Nah, Hogs Have Wilson

Tyler Wilson, the reigning first-team All-SEC quarterback, attained powers and abilities nearly beyond those of mortal men this spring.

At least that's the near-super description of Wilson from Arkansas offensive coordinator Paul Petrino.

In three spring scrimmages and the Red-White game, the senior completed 101 of 146 passes for 1,600 yards and 15 touchdowns ... with zero interceptions.

"You'd be hard-pressed to find a quarterback out there who's had a better spring ball than him," Petrino said. "If he did, then he's Superman."

Even Superman couldn't have outdone Wilson, who becomes Arkansas' face of the franchise after Bobby Petrino was fired and replaced through the season by John L. Smith, who will serve as interim head coach.

Fourth-year junior running back Knile Davis, himself a prominent team leader, said Wilson immediately took the team in hand when athletic director Jeff Long informed the players that Petrino had been terminated.

"Tyler got up there and talked to the team and told us we've just got to stay together and keep on going," Davis said. "Some guys thought the meeting was over and were ready to leave, but Tyler wanted to say a few extra words to keep the team together. It was cool."

Down one Petrino, Wilson never missed a spring beat with Paul Petrino coaching and calling plays. Paul, Bobby's brother, returned from Illinois as offensive coordinator/quarterbacks coach in time last December to join the team's preparation for the Cotton Bowl victory over Kansas State.

So, it was a smooth transition in the offseason for Wilson, who was 39 of 44 for 448 yards with three touchdowns in the first scrimmage minus Bobby Petrino. In the spring game, Wilson completed 31 of 41 passes for 467 yards and two touchdowns — and another sure touchdown was dropped.

Wilson, in his first season as a starter in 2011, had four games with at least 300 passing yards, including a monster game of 510 yards against what is now the new team in the SEC West — Texas A&M. He was 30 of 51 for three touchdowns vs. the Aggies.

Superman?

Arkansas will settle for him just to continue improving, and considering his spring as a team leader and spokesman, he's well on his way.

nis Johnson, who has three kick-return touchdowns for his career, and Wade, each returned a kick for a touchdown last year and again likely will cut short the opponents' scoring celebrations with the dread they must kick off.

The Hogs return senior punter Dylan Breeding and junior placekicker/kickoff man Zach Hocker. Breeding, averaging 45.3 per yards on 53 punts, kicked them long and high and well-placed with 16 inside the 20. Hocker made 21 of 27 field-goal attempts last season.

Snapper Alan D'Appollonio and holder Brian Buehner return.

SCHEDULE ANALYSIS

Arkansas' first SEC game looms as its most critical — against reigning national champion Alabama in Fayetteville on Sept. 15.

Alabama is the only SEC West team Bobby Petrino couldn't beat in his four Arkansas seasons, so a win here would make Smith an instant Arkansas folk hero if the Razorbacks can prevail at Reynolds Razorback Stadium.

LSU visits Fayetteville instead of Little Rock for the first time since 1992, while Ole Miss visits Little Rock instead of Fayetteville.

The SEC climb is always steep. Visits to Texas A&M (now an annual SEC foe instead of a non-conference rival), Auburn, South Carolina and Mississippi State won't be easy. Rutgers and Tulsa are the most intriguing games out of conference.

— Nate Allen

SCHEDULE

Date	Opponent	'11 Record
Sept. 1	JACKSONVILLE STATE	7-4
Sept. 8	ULM	4-8
Sept. 15	ALABAMA	12-1
Sept. 22	RUTGERS	9-4
Sept. 29	at Texas A&M	7-6
Oct. 6	at Auburn	8-5
Oct. 13	KENTUCKY	5-7
Oct. 27	OLE MISS	2-10
Nov. 3	TULSA	8-5
Nov. 10	at South Carolina	11-2
Nov. 17	at Mississippi State	7-6
Nov. 24	LSU	13-1

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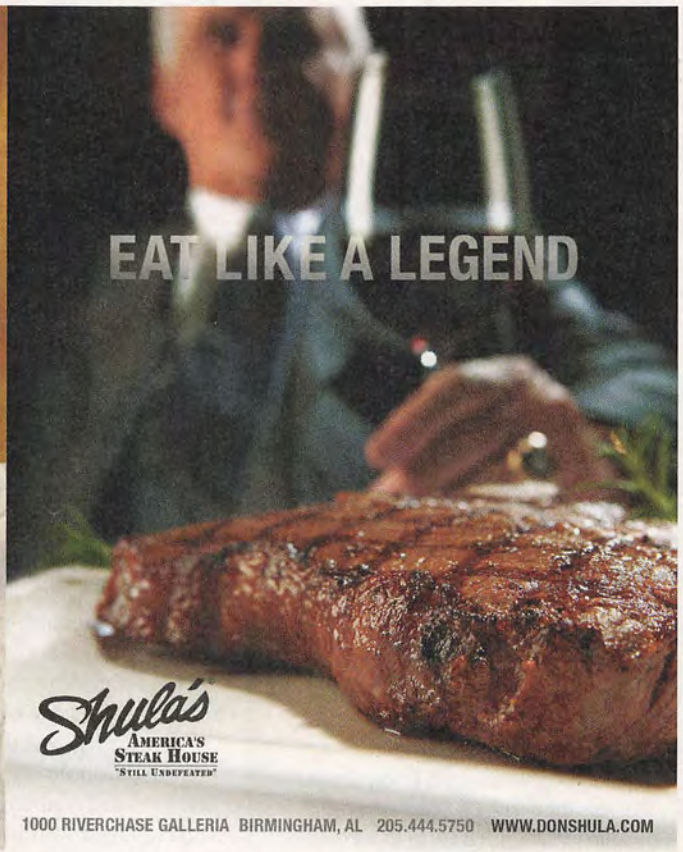

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AUBURN TIGERS

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OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Scot Loeffler **DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Brian VanGorder** **STADIUM: Jordan-Hare Stadium: 87,451**

AT A GLANCE

2011:
8-5, 4-4 SEC (4th, West)

COACH:
Gene Chizik — At Auburn: 30-10, 3 years; overall: 35-29, 5 years

RETURNING STARTERS:
18: 8 offense, 8 defense, kicker, punter

PLAYERS TO WATCH:
QB Kiehl Frazier, RB Corey Grant, TE Philip Lutzenkirchen, WR Emory Blake, OL Reese Dismukes, DE Corey Lemonier, DT Jeffrey Whitaker, LB Daren Bates

PRIMARY STRENGTHS:
Auburn returns quality veterans on both sides of the ball. The Tigers have a ton of speed at tailback. Fullback Jay Prosch instantly becomes one of the SEC's elite blockers. The defensive line is talented and deep at end and tackle. Special teams are solid across the board, especially in the kicking game.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS:
The quarterback position is still unsettled. Size might be an issue at tailback. The offensive line is talented but young. The linebacking corps lacks significant depth. The secondary is still a work in progress. Both the offense and defense are learning new systems.

KEY LOSSES:
RB Michael Dyer, OT Brandon Mosley, LB Eltoro Freeman

OVERVIEW:
The Tigers are still a maturing football team under Chizik and his two new coordinators. But with a more home-friendly schedule and more experience on the roster, Auburn could approach double-digit wins if everything falls in place. However, this team may be one year away from being an SEC title contender.

New Coordinators Try to Harness Tigers' Potential

The 2011 season turned into a year of transition for the Tigers.

After winning the national championship in 2010, Auburn was hit hard by graduation, including the early departures of Cam Newton and Nick Fairley to the NFL. The Tigers finished with an 8-5 record, playing primarily with freshmen and sophomores.

Despite ending the season with a 2-1 record against the East, Auburn finished 2-3 within its own division, which included double-digit losses to Arkansas, LSU and Alabama. And while the Tigers played well in spurts, they never showed enough consistency to play with the cream of the crop in the SEC West. Although it wasn't obvious at the time, staff changes were about to come.

Before the team played in the Chick-fil-A Bowl against Virginia, defensive coordinator Ted Roof took the same job at South Florida — before he left for Penn State's DC job — and offensive coordinator Gus Malzahn accepted the head coaching gig at Arkansas State. Phillip Lolley also accepted an administrative role after coaching the team's corners.

The three moves sparked a lot of conversation among the Auburn faithful, but it opened the door for three enticing hires by coach Gene Chizik.

On January 11, Chizik announced that he'd hired Brian VanGorder away from the Atlanta Falcons to replace Roof as defensive coordinator. In his final season with Atlanta, VanGorder's unit ranked sixth in the NFL against the run (97 yards per game) and 12th in total defense. He's a big proponent of passion and execution with his players.

"If you can get a group of guys to have conviction all towards going out and having the same common goal and go out and play with great passion, that's step No. 1," VanGorder said. "Then you need intelligence, which allows your defense to go out and execute."

Shortly after VanGorder came aboard, Chizik hired Scot Loeffler away from Temple. Loeffler, a respected quarterback guru, brings a pro-style offense that will emphasize a lot of formations and motion to confuse opposing defenses.

"It (motion) is a weapon, especially in college football," Loeffler said. "You can gain a tremendous amount of information by simply trading a tight end. There will be times that it's used and times that it's not, but it has its purposes."

The final piece to the offseason coaching puzzle came when Chizik hired Willie Martinez, formerly of Oklahoma, to head the secondary. Martinez will have a number of talented players to work with, as will Loeffler and VanGorder as the Tigers attempt to climb their way back to the upper echelon of the conference.

OFFENSE

New coordinator Scot Loeffler is a big proponent of power football out of more traditional sets, so Auburn's offense will look much different than it did a year ago under the direction of Gus Malzahn.

Loeffler's rushing attack at Temple last season ranked seventh nationally. It produced three tailbacks who rushed for more than 500 yards, including Bernard Pierce, who ran for 1,481 yards and a school-record 27 touchdowns, so the offensive philosophy should be a good fit in the SEC.

Kiehl Frazier and Clint Moseley remain in a battle for the starting quarterback job following spring practice. Although Frazier performed well in the A-Day Game, neither quarterback has secured the position. Summer preparations will be critical as they continue to

Corey Lemonier
Photo by RD Moore

learn the playbook.

"They are both really talented guys," Loeffler said. "They are walking into a new system and they're developing. They need to continue to develop and have a great training camp in order for us to be where we want to be in the fall."

Returning senior Onterio McCalebb, sophomores Corey Grant and Tre Mason and freshman Mike Blakely will all get touches in the backfield, but don't forget about signee Jovon Robinson. Robinson will instantly give the Tigers more size (6-0, 215) at the position. Both Blakely and Grant showed good speed and quickness in the A-Day Game.

Bruising fullback Jay Prosch will be a welcome addition to Auburn's new-look run game. Prosch is considered one of the nation's top blockers, and he packs a wallop when he connects with defenders. He will help solve the Tigers' struggles in short-yardage situations.

Philip Lutzenkirchen could be in line for a big season in Loeffler's offense, which will use multiple tight ends at times. Loeffler recognizes that Lutzenkirchen is a playmaker, and he'll get him the ball in a number of ways.

Wideout Emory Blake is another player who seems poised for a big season. After a transition period, Blake said he got the hang of the new offense.

"It's a little bit more complicated in how the plays are run and how they're called because they are long and descriptive," Blake said. "But aside from that, I feel like I'm picking it up pretty well."

Trovon Reed, Quan Bray, Travante Stallworth and youngsters Sammie Coates, Jaylon Denson, JaQuay Williams and Ricardo Louis also will vie for playing time at receiver.

Center Reese Dismukes returns to anchor a young offensive line. Chad Slade and John Sullen are veterans who have starting experience. Greg Robinson, who redshirted a year ago, will make his highly anticipated debut as the team's new left tackle.

DEFENSE

It was trial by fire last year for Auburn's young and inexperienced defense, but that could parlay into improved results in 2012.

Auburn returns numerous players who earned significant playing time a year ago, so the unit as a whole won't be as green. Throw in the fact that new defensive coordinator Brian VanGorder is now in charge, and the future looks bright for the Tigers defensively.

To be a championship-caliber team in the SEC, the defensive line must play well. With the return of veteran ends Corey Lemonier, Dee Ford, Craig Sanders and Nosa Eguae — along with tackles Jeffrey Whitaker, Angelo Blackson, Kenneth Carter, Gabe Wright and Devaunte Sigler — Auburn has the potential to be very good up front.

Emory Blake
Photo by Michael Wade

SCOUTING REPORT: Offense

POS	STARTER	YR.	COMMENT	BACKUP/KEY DEPTH
QB	Kiehl Frazier	So.	Looked sharp in A-Day Game; QB battle still ongoing.	Clint Moseley, Jr.*
RB	Onterio McCalebb*	Sr.	Big-time threat battling Grant, Mason for touches.	C. Grant, So./T. Mason, So.
FB	Jay Prosch	Jr.	Punishing blocker; should be major boost to running game.	Philip Lutzenkirchen, Sr.
WR	Emory Blake*	Sr.	Deep threat; good route runner; one of SEC's best WRs.	Sammie Coates, Fr.
WR	Travante Stallworth	Sr.	Averaged 16.5 yards per catch in 2011; quick in open field.	Trovon Reed, So.*
TE	Philip Lutzenkirchen*	Sr.	Will be a focal point of offense; team leader; playmaker.	Brandon Fulse, So.
LT	Greg Robinson	Fr.	Redshirted in '11; prototypical left tackle with size, agility.	Shane Callahan, Fr.
LG	John Sullen*	Sr.	Experienced veteran who offers good size.	Thomas O'Reilly, Fr.
C	Reese Dismukes*	So.	Freshman All-American; should anchor line for years.	Tunde Fariyike, So.
RG	Chad Slade*	So.	Versatile OL who's a good athlete; can also play tackle.	Christian Westerman, Fr.
RT	Patrick Miller	Fr.	Position in transition, but early enrollee had a good spring.	Eric Mack, So.
K	Cody Parkey*	Jr.	Strong leg; was 6 of 10 on FGs from 40-49 yards.	Alex Kviklys, Fr.

*Returning Starter

SCOUTING REPORT: Defense

POS	STARTER	YR.	COMMENT	BACKUP/KEY DEPTH
DE	Corey Lemonier*	Jr.	Led team in sacks; wants to gain 10 pounds before season.	Craig Sanders, Jr.
DT	Jeffrey Whitaker*	Jr.	May be a force; has been working on eluding double teams.	Kenneth Carter, Jr.*
DT	Angelo Blackson	So.	Raw player who made strides this spring; offers great size.	Devaunte Sigler, So.
DE	Dee Ford	Jr.	VanGorder calls Ford an impact player; big-time edge rusher.	Nosa Eguae, Jr.*
LB	Daren Bates*	Sr.	Loves contact; has become more vocal leader; forces TOs.	Jonathan Evans, Sr.
LB	Jake Holland	Jr.	Needs to step up in middle; still growing as a player.	Cassanova McKinzy, Fr.
LB	Kris Frost	Fr.	Great athlete had impressive spring; potential impact player.	Chris Landrum, Fr.
CB	Chris Davis*	Jr.	Drew praise from teammates for good spring; competitor.	Jonathon Mincy, So.
CB	T'Sharvan Bell*	Sr.	Sat out spring practice; will need to learn new defense.	Robenson Therezie, So.
S	Ryan Smith	Jr.	Doesn't mind mixing it up; will battle Florence for job.	Erique Florence, So.
S	Jermaine Whitehead	So.	Moved to safety; will battle with McNeal, others for spot.	Demetruce McNeal, Jr.*
P	Steven Clark*	Jr.	Big leg; forced 34 fair catches; nailed 33 inside the 20.	Will Campbell, Fr.

*Returning Starter

TIGERS RECRUITING 2012 rivals.com

3 NEWCOMERS OF IMPACT

Avery Young
It was a major score for Auburn to land Young on National Signing Day. He had flirted with both Florida and Georgia until the very end. Young is a Rivals100 offensive tackle with an incredible frame and the talent to go with it. All he needs is to add a little weight. This is a major talent with terrific agility.

JaQuay Williams
A four-star receiver from neighboring Georgia, Williams may have the highest upside of any Auburn signee from the 2012 class. He's tall, well-built and has better-than-average speed, plus very solid hands. He will be an extremely difficult matchup for the smaller corners in the league. Williams averaged 20-plus yards per catch in high school.

Ricky Parks
A 6-3, 230-pound tight end, Parks is among the most athletically gifted members of the Auburn class. He accounted for more than 750 yards of offense while taking snaps at quarterback as a senior. Because he played other positions in high school, the concern is how he will make the transition to tight end, which obviously involves more than just the ability to catch passes.

THE SLEEPER

Darrion Hutcherson
Hutcherson has all the tools to become a solid starter in the SEC. He's in the 6-7 range and has a terrific physique. Hutcherson is still a little raw, but he took to the tight end position very well during his final two seasons of high school. He's a solid route runner, and possesses a strong set of hands.

Committments	21
Average Stars	3.62
★★★★★	0
★★★★☆	13
★★★☆☆	8
★★☆☆☆	0
Total Stars	76
National Rank: 10	SEC: 3

2013 NEEDS: Even though the Tigers just signed two quarterbacks in the last cycle, it's possible they could try to bring in two more next February, as new offensive coordinator Scot Loeffler puts his imprint on the program. At the very least, they'll take one. Auburn also looks to bulk up on the defensive line. That is absolutely critical because the Tigers have a ton of juniors currently high on the depth chart there. Also, look for the Tigers to try to make some noise in the defensive backfield. They didn't sign a true safety in 2012.

by Keith Niebuhr/rivals.com

Name	Pos	Ht	Wt	Stars	Hometown	School
Will Adams	OL	6-5	280	★★★	Tyrone, GA	Sandy Creek
Rated as the No. 55 prospect in Georgia by Rivals.com...Switched from original commitment to Georgia Tech in favor of Auburn before signing day.						
Shane Callahan	OL	6-6	277	★★★★	Parker, CO	Chaparral
Rivals250 selection...Rated as the No. 4 prospect in Colorado...Rated as the nation's No. 22 offensive tackle.						
T.J. Davis	DB	6-1	170	★★★	Tallahassee, FL	Godby
Rated as the No. 49 prospect in Florida by Rivals.com...Rated as the nation's No. 29 cornerback.						
Jordan Diamond	OL	6-6	289	★★★★	Chicago, IL	Simeon
Rated as the No. 7 prospect in Illinois by Rivals.com...Rated as the nation's No. 28 offensive tackle...Late addition to Auburn class.						
Joshua Holsey	DB	5-9	171	★★★★	Fairburn, GA	Creekside
Rivals250 selection...Rated as the No. 13 prospect in Georgia...Rated as the nation's No. 15 cornerback...Had 73 tackles and five interceptions as a senior.						
Darrion Hutcherson	TE	6-7	247	★★★	Dadeville, AL	Dadeville
Rated as the No. 18 prospect in Auburn by Rivals.com...Rated as the nation's No. 20 tight end...Had 30 receptions for 572 yards and six touchdowns as a senior.						
Jonathan Jones	DB	5-10	165	★★★	Carrollton, GA	Carrollton
Rated as the No. 40 prospect in Georgia by Rivals.com...Rated as the nation's No. 40 cornerback.						
Alex Kozan	OL	6-4	295	★★★★	Castle Rock, CO	Valor Christian
Rated as the No. 5 prospect in Colorado by Rivals.com...Rated as the nation's No. 12 offensive guard...Late addition to Auburn class.						
Robert Leff	OL	6-6	255	★★★	Fairhope, AL	Fairhope School
Rated as the No. 26 prospect in Alabama by Rivals.com...Rated as the nation's No. 70 offensive tackle.						
Ricardo Louis	WR	6-2	190	★★★★	Miami Beach, FL	Miami Beach
Rivals250 selection...Rated as the No. 30 prospect in Florida...Rated as the nation's No. 27 wide receiver...Participated in the Under Armour All-American Game.						
Cassanova McKinzy	LB	6-2	224	★★★★	Birmingham, AL	Woodlawn
Rivals250 selection...Rated as the No. 9 prospect in Alabama...Rated as the nation's No. 19 outside linebacker...Participated in the Offense-Defense All-American Bowl.						

Name	Pos	Ht	Wt	Stars	Hometown	School
Patrick Miller	OL	6-7	260	★★★★	West Palm Beach, FL	Dwyer
Rivals250 selection...Rated as the No. 36 prospect in Florida...Rated as the nation's No. 24 offensive tackle...Enrolled at Auburn in January.						
Javiere Mitchell	LB	6-2	197	★★★★	Leeds, AL	Leeds
Rated as the No. 12 prospect in Alabama by Rivals.com...Rated as the nation's No. 25 outside linebacker.						
Tyler Nero	DT	6-2	290	★★★★	Atmore, AL	Escambia County
Rated as the No. 10 prospect in Alabama by Rivals.com...Rated as the nation's No. 22 defensive tackle...Had 74 tackles, 18 tackles for loss and six sacks as a senior.						
Ricky Parks	TE	6-3	230	★★★★	Hogansville, GA	Callaway
Rivals250 selection...Rated as the No. 10 prospect in Georgia...Rated as the nation's No. 2 tight end.						
Zeke Pike	QB	6-5	220	★★★	Edgewood, KY	Dixie Heights
Rated as the No. 2 prospect in Kentucky by Rivals.com...Rated as the nation's No. 16 pro-style quarterback...Participated in the U.S. Army All-American Bowl.						
Gimel President	DE	6-3	240	★★★	Mt. Pleasant, SC	Wando
Rated as the No. 14 prospect in South Carolina by Rivals.com...Participated in the Shrine Bowl of the Carolinas.						
Jovon Robinson	RB	6-0	215	★★★★	Memphis, TN	Wooddale
Rivals250 selection...Rated as the No. 3 prospect in Tennessee...Rated as the nation's No. 10 running back...Participated in the Offense-Defense All-American Bowl.						
Jonathan Wallace	QB	6-2	203	★★★	Phenix City, AL	Central
Rated as the No. 28 prospect in Alabama by Rivals.com...Rated as the nation's No. 25 dual-threat quarterback.						
JaQuay Williams	WR	6-3	204	★★★★	Tyrone, GA	Sandy Creek
Rivals100 selection...Rated as the No. 7 prospect in Georgia...Rated as the nation's No. 14 wide receiver...Participated in the Semper Fidelis All-American Bowl.						
Avery Young	OL	6-6	273	★★★★	Palm Beach Gardens, FL	Palm Beach Gardens
Rivals100 selection...Rated as the No. 14 prospect in Florida...Rated as the nation's No. 9 offensive tackle...Participated in the Under Armour All-American Game.						

TIGERS SPRING ROSTER

No.	Name	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.	Hometown
25	Daren Bates	LB	5-11	205	Sr.	Memphis, TN
22	T'Sharvan Bell	DB	6-0	185	Sr.	Kissimmee, FL
3	DeAngelo Benton	WR	6-2	203	Sr.	Bastrop, LA
98	Angelo Blackson	DL	6-4	325	So.	Bear, DE
80	Emory Blake	WR	6-2	197	Sr.	Austin, TX
22	Mike Blakely	RB	5-9	206	Fr.	Bradenton, FL
4	Quan Bray	WR	5-10	185	So.	LaGrange, GA
48	Blake Burgess	OL	6-3	285	Jr.	Vestavia Hills
77	Shane Callahan	OL	6-6	280	Fr.	Parker, CO
56	Will Campbell	P	6-1	235	Fr.	Auburn
41	Chico Canady	RB	5-9	196	Jr.	Notasulga
92	Kenneth Carter	DT	6-4	290	Jr.	Greenville
12	Ryan Carter	QB	6-2	204	Fr.	Hoover
30	Steven Clark	P	6-5	226	Jr.	Kansas City, MO
18	Sammie Coates	WR	6-2	178	Fr.	Leroy
11	Chris Davis	CB	5-11	188	Jr.	Birmingham
52	Justin Delaine	DE	6-5	238	So.	Linden
89	Jaylon Denson	WR	6-3	197	So.	Hoover
50	Reese Dismukes	C	6-3	300	So.	Spanish Fort
41	Adam Dyas	S	5-9	192	So.	Mobile
94	Nosa Eguae	DE	6-3	258	Jr.	Mansfield, TX
35	Jonathan Evans	LB	5-11	225	Sr.	Prichard
65	Tunde Fariyike	OL	6-2	290	So.	Thomaston, GA
40	Clay Finkelstein	LB	6-2	180	Fr.	Montgomery
31	Trent Fisher	DB	6-1	186	So.	Nashville, TN
14	Erique Florence	DB	6-1	187	So.	Valley
95	Dee Ford	DE	6-2	245	Jr.	Odenville
10	Kiehl Frazier	QB	6-2	220	So.	Springdale, AR
17	Kris Frost	ATH	6-2	225	Fr.	Matthews, NC
11	Brandon Fulse	TE	6-4	238	So.	Fort Meade, FL
26	Justin Garrett	LB	6-1	205	So.	Tucker, GA
20	Corey Grant	RB	5-11	205	So.	Opelika
46	Nosa Griggs	DB	5-10	154	Fr.	Fayetteville, GA
45	Keymiya Harrell	DE	6-4	225	Fr.	Plantersville
38	Billy Harris	WR	6-0	200	Fr.	Spanish Fort
64	Forrest Hill	DS	6-1	230	So.	Morrow, GA
5	Jake Holland	LB	6-1	235	Jr.	Pelham
72	Barrett Kernon	LS	6-4	268	Fr.	Daytona Beach, FL
89	Alex Kviklys	K	6-2	180	Fr.	Marietta, GA
33	Chris Landrum	LB	6-3	235	Fr.	Sweet Water
59	Jake Lembke	DS	6-2	236	Jr.	New Lenox, IL
55	Corey Lemonier	DE	6-4	240	Jr.	Hialeah, FL
43	Philip Lutzenkirchen	TE	6-5	250	Sr.	Marietta, GA
44	Patrick Lymon	RB	5-10	185	So.	Huntsville
60	Eric Mack	OL	6-3	315	So.	St. Matthews, SC
21	Tre Mason	RB	5-10	190	So.	Lake Worth, FL
23	Onterio McCalebb	RB	5-11	174	Sr.	Fort Meade, FL
12	Demetruce McNeal	DB	6-2	193	Jr.	College Park, GA
16	Ikeem Means	DB	6-0	205	Sr.	Wetumpka
51	Patrick Miller	OL	6-7	273	Fr.	West Palm Beach, FL
6	Jonathon Mincy	DB	5-10	180	So.	Decatur, GA
18	JaViere Mitchell	LB	6-2	197	Fr.	Leeds
58	C.T. Moorman	DS	6-0	225	Fr.	Durham, NC
8	Anthony Morgan	RB	5-11	195	Sr.	Brantley
15	Clint Moseley	QB	6-4	223	Jr.	Leroy
93	Jabrian Niles	DL	6-2	297	Fr.	Mobile
19	Tate O'Connor	DE	6-2	255	So.	Savannah, GA
66	Thomas O'Reilly	OL	6-3	325	Fr.	Marietta, GA
10	LaDarius Owens	DE	6-2	237	So.	Bessemer
36	Cody Parkey	K	6-0	190	Jr.	Jupiter, FL
14	Zeke Pike	QB	6-6	229	Fr.	Edgewood, KY
30	Daniel Pond	LB	6-1	215	Fr.	Spanish Fort
46	Blake Poole	DB	5-11	190	Jr.	Buchanan, GA
35	Jay Prosch	FB	6-0	253	Jr.	Mobile
1	Trovon Reed	WR	6-0	183	So.	Thibodaux, LA
84	Dimitri Reese	WR	5-11	170	So.	Birmingham
56	Ashton Richardson	LB	6-1	201	Sr.	New Orleans, LA
73	Greg Robinson	OL	6-5	315	Fr.	Thibodaux, LA
28	Jonathan Rose	DB	6-2	185	So.	Leeds
13	Craig Sanders	DE	6-4	260	Jr.	Clio
42	Chandler Shakespeare	RB	5-10	209	Jr.	Oxford
96	Devaunte Sigler	DL	6-4	295	So.	Mobile
62	Chad Slade	OL	6-5	314	So.	Moody
39	Ellis Smith	P	5-11	204	Fr.	LaGrange, GA
24	Ryan Smith	DB	6-2	208	Jr.	Cordova
47	Jordan Spriggs	DB	5-9	191	So.	Mobile
85	Travante Stallworth	WR	5-9	188	Sr.	Leesville, LA
71	John Sullen	OL	6-5	336	Sr.	Auburn
44	Anthony Swain	DB	6-2	245	Fr.	Gadsden
27	Robenson Therezie	DB	5-9	203	So.	Miami, FL
74	Jamar Travis	DL	6-0	296	Sr.	Brewton
81	C.J. Uzomah	ATH	6-4	246	So.	Suwanee, GA
99	Brian Walsh	DL	6-3	302	Fr.	Winter Springs, FL
83	David West	WR	6-0	214	Jr.	Hoover
57	Christian Westerman	OL	6-3	298	Fr.	Chandler, AZ
51	Jacob Westrich	LB	6-1	229	So.	Huntsville
54	Jeffrey Whitaker	DT	6-4	300	Jr.	Warner Robins, GA
38	Jawara White	LB	6-2	245	So.	Troy
19	Ryan White	DB	5-11	196	Jr.	Tallahassee, FL
32	Jermaine Whitehead	DB	5-11	195	So.	Greenwood, MS
49	Taylor Williams	WR	6-0	175	So.	Brenan
79	Colton Wingard	OL	6-2	289	So.	Alabaster
90	Gabe Wright	DL	6-3	305	So.	Columbus, GA
47	Patrick Young	WR	6-4	218	Fr.	Trussville

INDIVIDUAL STATS

PASSING

Name	GP	Effic	Cmp	Att	Int	Pct	Yds	TD	Lng	Avg/G
B. Trotter	8	129.20	92	167	6	55.1	1184	11	56	148.0
C. Moseley	10	133.06	66	108	3	61.1	800	5	45	80.0

RECEIVING

Name	GP	No.	Yds	Avg	TD	Lg	Avg/G
E. Blake	11	36	613	17.0	5	56	55.7
O. McCalebb	13	32	344	10.8	2	51	26.5
P. Lutzenkirchen	12	24	238	9.9	7	32	19.8

RUSHING

Name	GP	Att	Gain	Loss	Net	Avg	TD	Lg	Avg/G
M. Dyer	12	242	1293	51	1242	5.1	10	55	103.5
O. McCalebb	13	112	707	66	641	5.7	5	60	49.3
K. Frazier	13	76	343	16	327	4.3	3	22	25.2

DEF. LEADERS

Tackles: D. Bates 104, N. Thorpe 102, D. McNeal 74
Tackles for loss: C. Lemonier 13.5, D. Bates 8.5, E. Freeman 8.5
Sacks: C. Lemonier 9.5, E. Freeman 3. D. Bates 2.5
Interceptions: N. Thorpe 3, D. McNeal 2, T. Bell 2, J. Holland 2

NOTEBOOK

Team leader and big-time tight end **Philip Lutzenkirchen** sat out spring practice due to shoulder surgery, which was performed by Dr. James Andrews in Birmingham, Ala. Lutzenkirchen said the surgery went well and he expected to be cleared to resume football activities in June.

In addition to Lutzenkirchen being held out of spring practice, a number of defensive players also missed spring practice due to injuries.

Nosa Eguae, **Kenneth Carter** and **Gabe Wright** were notable defensive linemen who missed time. Defensive backs **T'Sharvan Bell**, **Demetruce McNeal** and **Erique Florence** did not participate, nor did veteran linebacker **Jonathan Evans**.

With first-year defensive coordinator **Brian VanGorder** implementing a new system, it will be paramount that the aforementioned defenders have solid fall camps to catch up on the time they missed in the spring.

• Lutzenkirchen, on new offensive coordinator **Scot Loeffler**: "I like him. He's been successful at this level and in the NFL. He definitely knows what he's doing. He knows how to identify playmakers and get them the ball."

• Senior wideout **Emory Blake** said he was working on everything this spring, including getting stronger "up top." He feels like he can get better in that area.

• Running back **Corey Grant** on new fullback **Jay Prosch**, who transferred from Illinois to be closer to his mother, who's been battling cancer: "He's big; he's physical; he's fast. He knows what he's doing. You can rely on him to get the job done."

• When asked about who the fastest player on the team is, Grant replied, "It's between me and **Onterio (McCalebb)**."

• Former five-star recruit **Shon Coleman** was finally cleared to practice with the team after a bout with leukemia. His return sparked coach Gene Chizik to make Coleman stand up in front of the team. When he did so, the entire squad gave him a standing ovation. Coleman will redshirt in 2012 and be ready to play next season.

• Linebacker Jawara White had to give up football due to injury problems. His loss, coupled with Evans' absence this spring, could mean early playing time for **Cassanova McKinzy** and **Javiere Mitchell**, two highly touted signees.

OPPOSING COACHES VIEW

• **On new offensive coordinator Scot Loeffler:** "I'm really impressed. He did a nice job at Temple with pro-style running. He's a really good offensive coach, although he's different from Gus Malzahn. Gus' offense would either bedazzle you with BS or you'd fall flat on your face, which happened a few times last year. The more exotic the offense, the more defenses catch up to it."

• **On the season outlook:** "They'll be better, but it will all hinge on the play of the quarterback. It's going back to the pro offense, which is more conducive to SEC style and way more conducive to being productive on defense. Couple that with the fact that Brian VanGorder will be the coordinator and run the defense fully. It won't be the coordinator, plus the head coach."

Philip Lutzenkirchen
Photo by Michael Wade

VanGorder singled out Lemonier and Ford for their efforts in spring practice; those two will be crucial to the overall success of a defense that is still going through a maturation process.

"The word potential is a good word with our defensive line," VanGorder said. "There are a lot of guys in that developmental stage, but we need Corey and Dee to be productive players for us."

"We are very motivated to play," said the 6-4 Whitaker, who has slimmed down to 300 pounds in an effort to gain more quickness. "We understand that no matter how good the secondary is or how good the linebacker corps is, if the defensive line is not producing, we are not going to have a good defense."

Senior Daren Bates, who led the team in tackles, returns at one outside linebacker spot. He'll be flanked by Jake Holland, who had 43 stops a year ago from his middle linebacker position. Kris Frost, who drew rave reviews during the spring, is in line to be the other outside 'backer.

"We are young, and we have a lot of talent," Bates said, "we just have to keep working and working to become a better defense."

The secondary will be under the direction of new coach Willie Martinez, and it, like almost every other unit on Auburn's defense, has a number of young players who could emerge at any time.

Jermaine Whitehead, Robenson Therezie, Chris Davis, Erique Florence, Ryan Smith, Ryan White, Jonathan Rose and Jonathon Mincy all saw significant action last season as either freshmen or sophomores. Veterans T'Sharvan Bell and Demetruce McNeal sat out spring practice but started last year.

"We've got to work to get that consistency that we don't have in the back end right now," VanGorder said. "I think we've got the players to gain that consistency as they go through summer, digest the playbook and get ready to work in the fall."

SPECIAL TEAMS

With the return of placekicker Cody Parkey and punter Steven Clark, Auburn's kicking game could be special. Parkey connected on 13 of 18 field-goal attempts a year ago and was 41 of 42 on PATs.

BEST & BRIGHTEST

MOST VALUABLE PLAYER

TE Philip Lutzenkirchen

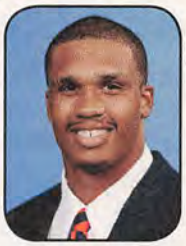
Lutzenkirchen is one of the most beloved — and versatile — Tigers in recent memory. ... Last year, coaches asked him to take on more of a blocking role because of Auburn's inexperience along the offensive line, and his stats suffered as a result. ... New coordinator Scot Loeffler didn't get a chance to see what Lutzenkirchen could do in spring practice after the tight end had offseason shoulder surgery, but he'll make the senior a focal point in the offense.

EMERGING STAR

QB Kiehl Frazier

Frazier isn't as big as Cam Newton, but his game mirrors the current Carolina Panthers star. ... The 6-2, 220-pound quarterback made big strides this spring and that parlayed into an impressive showing in the annual A-Day Game. Frazier completed 7 of 9 passes for 92 yards and showed flashes of his natural ability. ... Last year, defenses knew Frazier was going to run when he entered the game, and he was still effective. This year, look for him to prove he can pass and run effectively.

TOP NEWCOMER



LB Kris Frost

Frost, a physical player who likes contact, injured his shoulder a year ago and redshirted. ... His athletic ability is off the charts, but it's his instincts that could make him a future star. ... New coordinator Brian VanGorder likes the potential of the former five-star recruit and will be a big influence on how the 6-2, 225-pound Frost turns out. VanGorder has a reputation for turning out some fine linebackers, and Frost is in line to be another one.

2009 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	33.3	17
Rushing	212.0	13
Passing	219.8	56
Total	431.8	16
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	27.5	79
Rushing	156.1	78
Passing	218.0	57
Total	374.1	68
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 1	+ 0.08	58

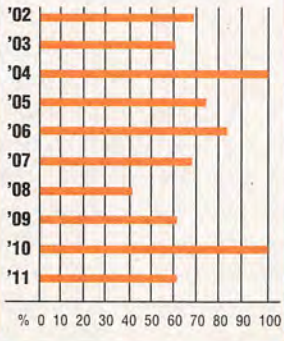
2010 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	41.2	7
Rushing	284.8	5
Passing	214.4	66
Total	499.2	7
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	24.1	53
Rushing	109.1	9
Passing	259.3	108
Total	368.4	60
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 5	+ 0.36	33

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	25.7	70
Rushing	182.3	32
Passing	155.5	105
Total	337.9	100
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	28.9	78
Rushing	189.2	94
Passing	218.8	51
Total	408.0	81
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 2	+ 0.15	44

10-YEAR WINNING TREND



RESULTS

8-5, 4-4

W	UTAH STATE	42-38
W	MISSISSIPPI STATE	41-34
L	at Clemson	24-38
W	FAU	30-14
W	at South Carolina	16-13
L	at Arkansas	14-38
W	FLORIDA	17-6
L	at LSU	10-45
W	OLE MISS	41-23
L	at Georgia	7-45
W	SAMFORD	35-16
L	ALABAMA	14-42
	Chick-fil-A Bowl	
W	vs. Virginia	43-24

PLAYER PROFILE

Corey Grant
Photo by Melissa Hazeldine-Auburn Athletic Dept.

Tide Transfer Set After Two-Year Wait

It's taken two years of running with the scout team at two powerful programs for sophomore tailback Corey Grant to finally get a shot at playing time.

Grant, who originally signed with Alabama out of Opelika (Ala.) High School in 2010, transferred from the Crimson Tide to the Tigers last offseason, but had to sit out a year due to the NCAA transfer rule.

Now, he is ready to prove what he can do as a member of the navy and burnt orange.

"Since I've been sitting out for the last two years, my goal is really just to play," Grant said. "If it's on special teams, offense, it doesn't matter. I just want to play."

Following Grant's senior year at Opelika, the Tigers looked as if they had a shot to land the two-time 6A 100-meter champion before Alabama eventually locked up the explosive tailback. But after only a season with the Tide, Grant felt like his talents would be better served playing elsewhere. And elsewhere was with Gene Chizik and the Tigers.

"It was more of a position change," Grant said. "When I was getting recruited (by Alabama), they were looking for more of a speed back. But as I got there, I really didn't see where that was coming into play. So I thought it would be best if I just decided to transfer somewhere where I could use my ability."

Due to the departure of offensive coordinator Gus Malzahn to Arkansas State, Grant will learn his third offense in as many seasons after Auburn hired Scot Loeffler away from Temple.

Loeffler's offense will feature more smash-mouth football and will give the 5-11, 205-pound Grant an opportunity to showcase his talents, whether between the tackles or on the perimeter. In fact, Grant, who scored the first touchdown of the annual A-Day Game, said he likes running inside.

"Actually, a lot of people think I don't, but I do," Grant said. "I think coming out of high school everyone knows me as a speed back, but I've changed over the last two years. I like running inside and outside."

With added bulk and his sub-4.3 speed, Grant should have a big role in Auburn's new-look offense.

"I'm very happy with my decision (to leave Alabama)," he said.

Clark (6-5, 226) looks like he should be hitting the glass on the basketball court, but he's one of the best at his craft in college football. Last year, he averaged 40.8 yards per punt, forced 34 fair catches and had 33 punts downed inside the 20.

The return game is in good hands with Onterio McCalebb, Trey Mason and Quan Bray as the top threats. McCalebb is one of the fastest men in college football. Bray plays much bigger than his size (5-10, 184) and has the swagger to be a top-notch returner.

SCHEDULE ANALYSIS

Chizik's club should have a good idea where they're at following the fifth game of the regular season. The Tigers open up with ACC champion Clemson in Atlanta, then travel to Starkville to take on Mississippi State.

After a home date with Louisiana-Monroe, Auburn will find out if it's a pretender or contender in the SEC West when division foes LSU and Arkansas visit Jordan-Hare Stadium. The Tigers will have an off week in between the games, which should help matters.

Following road trips to Ole Miss and Vandy, AU hosts four more games, which include Texas A&M and Georgia. If Auburn can win its huge division games early, then the Iron Bowl at Alabama on Nov. 24 could have division title implications.

— Matt Lowe

SCHEDULE

Date	Opponent	'11 Record
Sept. 1	vs. Clemson (Atlanta, GA)	10-4
Sept. 8	at Mississippi State	7-6
Sept. 15	ULM	4-8
Sept. 22	LSU	13-1
Oct. 6	ARKANSAS	11-2
Oct. 13	at Ole Miss	2-10
Oct. 20	at Vanderbilt	6-7
Oct. 27	TEXAS A&M	7-6
Nov. 3	NEW MEXICO STATE	4-9
Nov. 10	GEORGIA	10-4
Nov. 17	ALABAMA A&M	8-4
Nov. 24	at Alabama	12-1

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OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Brent Pease | **DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Dan Quinn** | **STADIUM: Ben Hill Griffin: 88,548**

AT A GLANCE

2011:
7-6 overall, 3-5 SEC (3rd, East)

COACH:
Will Muschamp – At Florida: 7-6, 1 year

RETURNING STARTERS:
18; 6 offense, 10 defense, kicker, punter

PLAYERS TO WATCH:
QB Jacoby Brissett, QB Jeff Driskel, RB Mike Gillislee, WR Andre Debose, DT Sharrif Floyd, LB Jonathan Bostic, LB Jelani Jenkins, DB Matt Elam

PRIMARY STRENGTHS:
The Gators are sound defensively, returning 10 starters (including injured defensive end Ronald Powell) from a unit that finished last season eighth in the country in total defense. The offensive line appears greatly improved.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS:
Scoring. UF was horrid offensively last season and now must jell with a new starting quarterback and offensive coordinator. There is no proven commodity at any of the skill positions. The Gators could also have trouble rushing the passer while Powell is out.

KEY LOSSES:
QB John Brantley, RB Jeff Demps, RB Chris Rainey, DT Jaye Howard

OVERVIEW:
The Gators should improve their win total after a subpar 7-6 campaign last season. Muschamp's second Florida team has greater depth and should boast one of the SEC's best defenses, even if Powell misses a chunk of the season. Still, UF isn't ready to return to national prominence and likely won't have enough scoring capability to capture the SEC East.

New OC Ready to Reignite Punchless Gators

The numbers were hideous.

Florida's offense was simply dreadful last season in coach Will Muschamp's first year. The rookie coach hired former Notre Dame coach Charlie Weis to run his pro-style offense, switching UF from the spread attack used under Urban Meyer. The transition was anything but smooth.

The Gators finished 7-6 with an offense that ranked 105th in total yardage out of 120 programs. Florida was 71st in scoring and 113th in turnover margin.

"It's a minor miracle we won seven games," Muschamp said.

Maybe, but seven-win seasons aren't what Florida expects. Muschamp must field a significantly improved squad in Year 2 to prove he's the right man to lead the Gators.

With a more experienced squad and a top-notch new coordinator, Florida seems to be moving in the right direction again.

"I feel much better standing here today than I did a year ago as far as where we are as a football team," Muschamp said following spring practice.

Weis left to take the Kansas job in December, and Muschamp quickly showed off his recruiting acumen. He landed Boise State offensive coordinator Brent Pease. The Broncos finished tied for ninth nationally in total offense last season. Also impressive: Boise State baffled Georgia in the season opener, beating the Bulldogs, 35-21, in Atlanta's Georgia Dome.

Pease has SEC coaching experience, serving as Kentucky's offensive coordinator from 2001-02. Muschamp remains dedicated to a pro-style scheme, but expect the Gators to use much more pre-snap motion with Pease calling the plays.

"Brent and I are philosophically on the same page with what we want," Muschamp said. "We want to be a physical football team that's able to run the ball when we need to, that still has the gadgets and the tricks and is efficient in the passing game."

The offensive rebuilding will get a boost from a much more experienced line, as well as a defense that returns 15 of its top 16 returning tacklers. More than anything, Muschamp's second UF roster is deeper, more mature and has a firmer understanding of his concepts.

"I really like our locker room right now," Muschamp said.

"We're not perfect, but we've got guys who understand what it takes to be successful. I don't think I need to constantly preach leadership. There are guys on our football team that are willing to do that. And it's not fake and it's not just sometimes; it's an all-the-time thing."

OFFENSE

The biggest personnel question is clear: Who will be the starting quarterback?

True sophomores Jacoby Brissett and Jeff Driskel battled through spring practice, but Muschamp extended the competition into August.

Both played last season when John Brantley was hurt and struggled. The Gators need one to emerge and be an upgrade over departed starter Brantley, who threw for 20 touchdowns and 17 interceptions over the last two seasons.

Brissett is more of a pocket passer, while Driskel brings excellent mobility to the position. Both have a strong arm and size. Brissett is 6-3, 229 pounds, while Driskel is 6-4 and weighs 232 pounds.

"We can win with both guys," Muschamp said.

Muschamp said after spring drills that the quarterback who showed the best leadership qualities and got the offense organized over the summer would have

Jonathan Bostic
Photo by Joe Robbins

an advantage.

"They've got to take control of our football team," Muschamp said.

While UF had a small senior class last season, one position that was hit hard was running back. Jeff Demps and Chris Rainey are gone, but senior Mike Gillislee impressed Muschamp with his strong start to the offseason.

Gillislee (5-11, 201 pounds) is a gifted runner with tremendous cutting ability. He's also a lot bigger than Rainey and Demps and will provide the inside running game Muschamp craves. The knock on Gillislee has been his inability to pass protect and read blitzes. If he can improve in those areas, and Muschamp believes he has, UF might have a reliable back.

Reserves Mack Brown and Chris Johnson are untested, but showed positive signs in the spring.

Receiver is another area of concern as no wideout returns having caught more than 16 passes last season. Redshirt junior Andre Debose is an established deep threat, but must become more consistent. Tight end Jordan Reed is the team's top returning leader in catches. The redshirt junior caught 28 balls a year ago as he transitioned from playing quarterback.

The strength of the offense will be up front. Offensive line is a position the Gators really struggled with last season. Florida's line welcomes back four starters and appears battle-tested after getting shoved back too often in 2011.

The unit, led by senior left tackle Xavier Nixon and redshirt junior right guard Jon Halapio, has combined to make 69 career starts. Each expected starter has logged a minimum of six starts.

"We're just better up front," Muschamp said.

"We're tougher. We're stronger. I'm just really pleased with our progress on the offensive line. If there's any one unit of our football team that I think has made tremendous strides and needed to, it's been there."

DEFENSE

There was little to worry about on this side of the ball until the spring game.

Florida finished eighth in the country last season in total defense and was set to lose only one starter — defensive tackle Jaye Howard.

However, defensive end/linebacker Ronald Powell, the starter at UF's "Buck" position, suffered a torn ACL in his left knee during the spring game. UF expects its 2011 sack leader to play at some point this season, listing his recovery time at four-to-six months.

Without Powell, Florida still has plenty to like on defense.

End Sharrif Floyd should have a dominating junior season. Tackle Dominique Easley and nose guard Omar

Andre Debose
Photo by Derick E. Hingle-US PRESSWIRE

SCOUTING REPORT: Offense

POS	STARTER	YR.	COMMENT	BACKUP/KEY DEPTH
QB	Jacoby Brissett	So.	Seemed to pass Driskel last year; we'll see in the fall.	Jeff Driskel, So.
RB	Mike Gillislee	Sr.	Ready for a breakout? Has 920 career rushing yards.	Mack Brown, So.
FB	Trey Burton*	Jr.	Has scored 16 career touchdowns.	Hunter Joyer, So.
WR	Andre Debose	Jr.	He averaged 27 yards a catch in 2011.	Latroy Pittman, Fr.
WR	Quinton Dunbar	So.	Must become a consistent performer.	Frankie Hammond Jr., Sr.
TE	Jordan Reed*	Jr.	Ranked second on team in catches (28) last season.	Clay Burton, So.
LT	Xavier Nixon*	Sr.	Has started 22 career games.	D.J. Humphries, Fr.
LG	James Wilson	Sr.	Granted sixth year of eligibility by NCAA.	Sam Robey, Sr.
C	Jonotthan Harrison*	Jr.	Started every game last season.	Kyle Koehne, Jr.
RG	Jon Halapio*	Jr.	Has logged 20 starts in his career.	Jessamen Dunker, Fr.
RT	Matt Patchan*	Jr.	Started the final seven games of the regular season.	Chaz Green, So.
K	Caleb Sturgis*	Sr.	Finalist for the Lou Groza Award last season.	Brad Phillips, Jr.

*Returning Starter

SCOUTING REPORT: Defense

POS	STARTER	YR.	COMMENT	BACKUP/KEY DEPTH
DE	Sharrif Floyd*	Jr.	Made 46 tackles in 11 games last season.	Earl Okine, Sr.
DT	Dominique Easley*	Jr.	Coming off an ACL tear in the FSU game.	Leon Orr, So.
DT	Omar Hunter	Sr.	Has played in 43 games in his UF career.	Damien Jacobs, Jr.
DE	Lerentee McCray*	Sr.	Playing new spot until Powell returns.	Ronald Powell, Jr.*
LB	Jelani Jenkins*	Jr.	Has made 23 starts in his career.	Darrin Kitchens, Jr.
LB	Jonathan Bostic*	Sr.	Was the team's leading tackler last season.	Antonio Morrison, Fr.
LB	Michael Taylor	So.	Made 36 stops as a reserve last year.	Graham Stewart, So.
CB	Marcus Roberson*	So.	Started 10 games as a true freshman.	Loucheiz Purifoy, So.
CB	Cody Riggs*	Jr.	Logged 10 starts last season.	Jaylen Watkins, Jr.
SS	Matt Elam*	Jr.	Led Gators in tackles behind the line.	Valdez Showers, Fr.
FS	Josh Evans*	Sr.	Team's fifth-leading tackler last season.	De'Ante Saunders, So.
P	Kyle Christy*	So.	Averaged 40.9 yards a punt in 2011.	Austin Hardin, Fr.

*Returning Starter

GATORS RECRUITING 2012

rivals.com

3 NEWCOMERS OF IMPACT

D.J. Humphries
Because of his immense talents and Florida's great need for depth and production at offensive tackle, he was a major pickup for coach Will Muschamp and Co. It wouldn't be surprising if he's a key contributor or even possibly a starter in 2012. This is a player who might have the highest upside of any interior lineman in the country in his class.

Jonathan Bullard
A strongside defensive end from North Carolina, Bullard has an impressive bull-rush and gets into linemen before they can react. Against the run, he is great at peeling back and staying in the play as well as spinning off blocks. With Florida looking to rotate linemen and keep them fresh, that gives him a chance to play early.

Dante Fowler Jr.
A hybrid weakside defensive/outside linebacker, Fowler is a special talent who was unblockable at the high school level when he was focused. He is known for his speed, his lightning-quick re-directs and a series of spin moves that don't leave an opponent much time to react. He also has the ability to drop into coverage.

THE SLEEPER

Quinteze Williams
In this Florida class, Williams was not one of the most talked-about recruits. But the 6-4, 295-pound defensive end arguably is the most physically impressive player of the group. He's big; he's strong and he moves reasonably well. This is a young man who is very well put together. He just needs some seasoning.

Committments	23
Average Stars	3.70
★★★★★	3
★★★★☆	11
★★★☆☆	8
★★☆☆☆	1
Total Stars	85
National Rank: 3	SEC: 2

2013 NEEDS: The Gators are looking to sign high numbers in two areas: offensive line and receiver. Even though Florida had quality on the line with its 2012 class, it didn't get the amount it needed. The result is that the depth on the offensive interior is down. The goal in this cycle is to sign at least five players there. At receiver, the Gators had some misses in February, and will need to make up for that this time around. This is a major position of need and Florida has to hit a home run in 2013.

by Keith Niebuhr/rivals.com

Name	Pos	Ht	Wt	Stars	Hometown	School
Raphael Andrades	WR	6-0	190	★★★	Tallahassee, FL	Lincoln
Rated as the nation's No. 99 wide receiver by Rivals.com...Surprise addition to the Florida recruiting class on National Signing Day.						
Willie Bailey	DB	6-1	165	★★★	Hallandale, FL	Hallandale
Rated as the No. 77 prospect in Florida by Rivals.com...Rated as the nation's No. 38 cornerback...Enrolled at Florida in January.						
Jonathan Bullard	DE	6-4	255	★★★★★	Shelby, NC	Crest
Rivals100 selection...Rated as the No. 2 prospect in North Carolina...Rated as the nation's No. 1 strongside defensive end...Participated in the U.S. Army All-American Bowl.						
Bryan Cox Jr.	DE	6-3	240	★★★	Fort Lauderdale, FL	St. Thomas Aquinas
Rated as the No. 66 prospect in Florida by Rivals.com...Rated as the nation's No. 37 strongside defensive end...Son of former NFL linebacker Bryan Cox.						
Jessamen Dunker	OL	6-6	315	★★★★	Boynton Beach, FL	Boynton Beach
Rivals250 selection...Rated as the No. 20 prospect in Florida...Rated as the nation's No. 5 offensive guard...Participated in the Under Armour All-American Game...Enrolled at Florida in January.						
Dante Fowler Jr.	DE	6-3	232	★★★★★	St. Petersburg, FL	Lakewood
Rivals100 selection...Rated as the No. 5 prospect in Florida...Rated as the nation's No. 3 weakside defensive end...Participated in the Under Armour All-American Game.						
Austin Hardin	K	5-11	200	★★	Atlanta, GA	Marist School
Rated as the nation's No. 11 kicker by Rivals.com...Participated in the Under Armour All-American Game.						
D.J. Humphries	OL	6-5	265	★★★★★	Charlotte, NC	Mallard Creek
Rivals100 selection...Rated as the No. 1 prospect in North Carolina...Rated as the nation's No. 1 offensive tackle...Participated in the U.S. Army All-American Bowl...Enrolled at Florida in January.						
Damien Jacobs	DT	6-4	290	★★★★	Scooba, MS	East Mississippi C.C.
Rated as the nation's No. 11 junior college prospect by Rivals.com...Chose Florida over Tennessee...Enrolled at Florida in January.						
Matt Jones	RB	6-3	225	★★★★	Seffner, FL	Armwood
Rivals250 selection...Rated as the No. 32 prospect in Florida...Rated as the nation's No. 15 running back.						
Rhaheim Ledbetter	DB	5-11	190	★★★	Boiling Springs, NC	Crest
Rated as the No. 12 prospect in North Carolina by Rivals.com...Rated as the nation's No. 25 safety.						

Name	Pos	Ht	Wt	Stars	Hometown	School
JaFar Mann	DT	6-4	275	★★★	Stone Mountain, GA	Stephenson
Rated as the No. 54 prospect in Georgia by Rivals.com...Rated as the nation's No. 48 defensive tackle...Participated in the Offense-Defense All-American Bowl.						
Marcus Maye	DB	6-1	195	★★★★	Melbourne, FL	Holy Trinity
Rivals100 selection...Rated as the No. 13 prospect in Florida...Rated as the nation's No. 5 safety...Participated in the Under Armour All-American Game.						
Alex McCalister	DE	6-7	212	★★★	Clemmons, NC	West Forsyth
Rated as the No. 14 prospect in North Carolina by Rivals.com...Rated as the nation's No. 26 weakside defensive end...Chose Florida over Georgia Tech and North Carolina.						
Skyler Mornhinweg	QB	6-3	215	★★★	Philadelphia, PA	St. Joseph's
Rated as the No. 36 prospect in Pennsylvania by Rivals.com...Switched to Florida after previous commitments to Stanford and Penn State.						
Antonio Morrison	LB	6-3	220	★★★★	Bolingbrook, IL	Bolingbrook
Rivals250 selection...Rated as the No. 5 prospect in Illinois...Rated as the nation's No. 10 inside linebacker...Enrolled at Florida in January.						
Dante Phillips	DT	6-6	268	★★★★	Venice, FL	Venice
Rivals250 selection...Rated as the No. 24 prospect in Florida...Rated as the nation's No. 9 defensive tackle...Participated in the U.S. Army All-American Bowl.						
Latroy Pittman	WR	6-1	190	★★★★	Citra, FL	North Marion
Rivals250 selection...Rated as the No. 34 prospect in Florida...Rated as the nation's No. 32 wide receiver...Enrolled at Florida in January.						
Brian Poole	DB	5-11	187	★★★★	Bradenton, FL	Southeast
Rivals100 selection...Rated as the No. 16 prospect in Florida...Rated as the nation's No. 5 cornerback...Participated in the Under Armour All-American Game.						
Jeremi Powell	LB	6-2	200	★★★★	Largo, FL	Pinellas Park
Rivals250 selection...Rated as the No. 35 prospect in Florida...Rated as the nation's No. 17 outside linebacker.						
Kent Taylor	TE	6-5	220	★★★★	Land O-Lakes, FL	Land O- Lakes
Rivals100 selection...Rated as the No. 10 prospect in Florida...Rated as the nation's No. 1 tight end...Participated in the U.S. Army All-American Bowl.						
Colin Thompson	TE	6-5	255	★★★★	Warminster, PA	Archbishop Wood Catholic
Rivals250 selection...Rated as the No. 5 prospect in Pennsylvania...Rated as the nation's No. 6 tight end... Participated in the Under Armour All-American Game.						
Quinteze Williams	DE	6-4	295	★★★	Tyrone, GA	Sandy Creek
Rated as the No. 37 prospect in Georgia by Rivals.com...Rated as the nation's No. 22 strongside defensive end...Enrolled at Florida in January.						

GATORS SPRING ROSTER

No.	Name	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.	Hometown
53	Cody Adams	LB	6-0	216	Fr.	Ocala
25	Gideon Ajagbe	BUCK	6-3	222	So.	Coconut Grove
58	Nick Alajajian	DT	6-4	285	Sr.	Naples
89	Stephen Alli	WR	6-6	217	Jr.	Andover, NH
27	Willie Bailey	DB	6-1	170	Fr.	Hallandale
1	Jonathan Bostic	LB	6-1	243	Sr.	Wellington
12	Jacoby Brissett	QB	6-3	229	So.	West Palm Beach
8	Jeremy Brown	DB	5-10	181	Jr.	Orlando
33	Mack Brown	RB	5-11	210	So.	Lithonia, GA
88	Clay Burton	TE	6-4	242	So.	Venice
8	Trey Burton	RB	6-3	227	Jr.	Venice
54	David Campbell	LB	5-11	205	Jr.	Live Oak
14	Chandler Carr	QB	5-11	211	Jr.	Ponte Vedra Beach
44	Kyle Christy	P	6-3	200	So.	Brownsburg, IN
30	Tim Clark	DB	5-10	201	Jr.	Wellborn
47	John Crofoot	K	5-11	150	Jr.	Windemere
43	Kyle Crofoot	LS	6-3	214	Fr.	Windemere
4	Andre Debose	WR	5-11	186	Jr.	Sanford
6	Jeff Driskel	QB	6-4	232	So.	Oviedo
1	Quinton Dunbar	WR	6-1	183	So.	Miami
74	Jessamen Dunker	OL	6-4	313	Fr.	Boynton Beach
2	Dominique Easley	DT	6-2	286	Jr.	Staten Island, NY
22	Matt Elam	DB	5-10	210	Jr.	Palm Beach Gardens
9	Josh Evans	DB	6-1	201	Sr.	Irvington, NJ
39	Todd Fennell	P	6-1	176	Fr.	Vero Beach
46	Drew Ferris	LS	6-1	214	Jr.	Carlsbad, CA
73	Sharrif Floyd	DT	6-3	305	Jr.	Philadelphia, PA
62	Cole Gilliam	OL	6-4	315	Jr.	Valrico
23	Mike Gillislee	RB	5-11	201	Sr.	DeLand
21	Jabari Gorman	DB	5-9	183	So.	Miami
75	Chaz Green	OL	6-5	300	So.	Tampa
67	Jon Halapio	OL	6-3	325	Jr.	St. Petersburg
85	Frankie Hammond, Jr.	WR	6-1	185	Sr.	Hollywood
72	Jonotthan Harrison	OL	6-3	309	Jr.	Groveland
20	Omarius Hines	TE	6-2	223	Sr.	Corsicana, TX
90	Evan Holmes	DE	6-2	222	Fr.	St. Petersburg
70	D.J. Humphries	OL	6-6	272	Fr.	Charlotte, NC
99	Omar Hunter	DT	6-1	314	Sr.	Buford, GA
4	Damien Jacobs	DT	6-3	310	Jr.	Scooba, MS
3	Jelani Jenkins	LB	6-0	233	Jr.	Olney, MD
32	Chris Johnson	RB	5-9	205	So.	Ocala
93	Kedric Johnson	DE	6-4	232	Jr.	Palmetto
65	Tommy Jordan	OL	6-4	288	Fr.	Ridgefield, CT
41	Hunter Joyer	RB	5-10	244	So.	Wesley Chapel
49	Darrin Kitchens	LB	6-2	222	Jr.	Homestead
64	Kyle Koehne	OL	6-5	304	Jr.	Indianapolis, IN
81	A.C. Leonard	TE	6-4	245	So.	Jacksonville
33	Chris Maignan	WR	6-0	178	Jr.	Miami
34	Lerentee McCray	LB	6-2	247	Sr.	Ocala
19	Ryan McGriff	QB	6-0	201	Fr.	Gainesville
30	Michael McNeely	WR	5-8	176	So.	Clearwater
22	Hugh Miles	DB	5-9	185	Fr.	Miami
87	A.J. Mobley	WR	5-10	210	So.	Fayetteville, GA
12	Antonio Morrison	LB	6-1	216	Fr.	Bolingbrook, IL
10	Tyler Murphy	QB	6-2	204	So.	Wethersfield, CT
73	Xavier Nixon	OL	6-6	309	Sr.	Fayetteville, NC
91	Earl Okine	DE	6-7	266	Sr.	Gainesville
44	Leon Orr	DT	6-5	305	So.	New Port Richey
15	Ryan Parrish	QB	6-2	201	Jr.	Lakeland
71	Matt Patchan	OL	6-6	279	Jr.	Tampa
83	Solomon Patton	WR	5-9	169	Jr.	Mobile, AL
27	Ben Peacock	DB	5-8	173	Fr.	Bradenton
16	Scott Peek	RB	6-2	232	Jr.	Tampa
97	Brad Phillips	K	5-10	190	Jr.	Gainesville
13	Latroy Pittman	WR	6-0	201	Fr.	Citra
7	Ronald Powell	BUCK	6-4	250	Jr.	Moreno Valley, CA
13	Christian Provancha	QB	6-6	222	So.	Cocoa
15	Loucheiz Purifoy	DB	6-1	186	So.	Pensacola
11	Jordan Reed	TE	6-3	239	Jr.	New London, CT
68	John Reichardt	DT	6-1	303	Jr.	Gainesville
31	Cody Riggs	DB	5-9	180	Jr.	Fort Lauderdale
5	Marcus Roberson	DB	6-0	180	So.	Ft. Lauderdale
50	Sam Robey	OL	6-3	297	Sr.	Louisville, KY
26	De'Ante Saunders	DB	5-8	186	So	DeLand
35	Jesse Schmitt	RB	5-7	166	Fr.	Palm Beach Gardens
18	Evan Schroeder	DB	5-11	182	Fr.	New Smyrna Beach
10	Valdez Showers	DB	5-11	188	Fr.	Madison Heights, MI
77	Ian Silberman	OL	6-5	288	So.	Orange Park
55	Graham Stewart	LB	6-1	227	So.	Middletown, CT
80	Ja'Juan Story	WR	6-3	206	Fr.	Brooksville
19	Caleb Sturgis	K	5-11	187	Sr.	St. Augustine
51	Michael Taylor	LB	6-0	220	So.	Atlanta, GA
36	Marcus Thompson	DB	6-0	190	Fr.	Gainesville
63	Trip Thurman	OL	6-5	315	Fr.	Dover, DE
95	Francisco Velez	K	5-9	173	Jr.	Ocala
14	Jaylen Watkins	DB	6-0	187	Jr.	Cape Coral
97	Tevin Westbrook	DE	6-5	268	So.	Coconut Creek
37	Dakota Wilson	LB	5-11	240	Fr.	Palm Beach Gardens
66	James Wilson	OL	6-4	327	Sr.	St. Augustine

INDIVIDUAL STATS

PASSING

	GP	Effic	Cmp	Att	Int	Pct	Yards	TD	Long	Avg/G
J. Brantley	11	140.83	144	240	7	60.0	2044	11	83	185.8
J. Brissett	8	86.93	18	39	4	46.2	206	2	65	25.8

RECEIVING

	GP	No.	Yards	Avg	TD	Long	Avg/G
C. Rainey	12	31	381	12.3	2	83	31.8
J. Reed	11	28	307	11.0	2	31	27.9
D. Thompson	13	21	264	12.6	1	41	20.3

RUSHING

	GP	Att	Gain	Loss	Net	Avg	TD	Long	Avg/G
C. Rainey	12	171	938	77	861	5.0	2	47	71.8
J. Demps	12	98	612	43	569	5.8	6	84	47.4
M Gillislee	11	56	334	6	328	5.9	2	60	29.8

DEF. LEADERS

Tackles: J. Bostic 94, M. Elam 78, Je. Jenkins 75
Tackles for loss: M. Elam 11, J. Bostic 10, J. Howard 10
Sacks: R. Powell 6, J. Howard 5.5, J. Bostic 3
Interceptions: M. Elam 2, D. Saunders 2, four tied with 1

NOTEBOOK

Florida's defense was set to return 10 starters from last season, but that number has dipped by one at least for the first portion of the season.

Junior defensive end/linebacker **Ronald Powell** tore the ACL in his left knee during the second quarter of Florida's spring game April 7. The 6-4, 250-pound Powell is expected to miss four-to-six months. For a pure speed rusher, that timetable might be a best-case scenario. Should Powell miss six months, his return would come roughly midway through the season.

Powell, the nation's No. 1 overall recruit coming out of high school, led the team in sacks last season with six. He recorded 32 tackles, including nine for a loss, in 12 starts.

Without Powell, the Gators lose their top two leaders in sacks from last season. Defensive tackle Jaye Howard had 5.5 sacks.

Florida finished in a tie for 44th in the country in sacks with 28 last season during its 7-6 campaign.

Coach **Will Muschamp** was hopeful Florida's pass rush would improve, but that will be incredibly difficult without Powell. Muschamp named him the Defensive Player of the Day in both scrimmages leading up to the spring game.

UF likely will turn to redshirt senior **Lerentee McCray** in its attempt to replace Powell in the lineup. McCray started five of the nine games he played in last season at outside linebacker, but will likely be moved to the "BUCK" position.

• Sophomore tight end **A.C. Leonard**'s status remained a question at the end of spring ball following his arrest on Feb. 15 for allegedly shoving his girlfriend to the ground. Leonard pleaded no contest on April 4 and received six months probation.

Muschamp reinstated Leonard to practice March 26, but he did not play in the spring game. Muschamp has strongly hinted that Leonard will face a suspension to start the season.

The 6-4, 245-pound Leonard is a promising target, after catching eight passes for 99 yards last season. All eight receptions came in the final five games of the season.

OPPOSING COACHES VIEW

• **On new offensive coordinator Brent Pease, who replaces Charlie Weis:** "Losing Charlie Weis actually helps Florida because he didn't bring the creativity on offense Will (Muschamp) envisioned. The hire from Boise State is the best hire of the year. Brent has proven, with less talent, that he knows how to move the ball and score points."

• **On the Gators' defense:** "If those front guys play hard every play, holy mackerel. That front four they had last year was outstanding. They're physical. We had one heck of a day trying to block them. I love (Sharrif) Floyd. He's a rare guy. He can speed move you, or pick you up and throw you down. I'd be shocked if they're not one of the most talented couple of defenses in the league."

Sharrif Floyd
Photo by Kim Klement-US PRESSWIRE

Hunter also provide experienced talent. Florida also signed an eight-man haul of defensive linemen in February, led by two five-star talents in Jonathan Bullard and Dante Fowler Jr.

Florida's pass rush must improve after recording 28 sacks last season, which tied for 44th in the country.

The linebackers return intact with steady Jonathan Bostic and Jelani Jenkins leading the way. The pair has started a combined 42 games.

Bostic, a senior, is an intelligent middle linebacker, who led UF in tackles last season with 94. Jenkins is an athletic specimen but must do a better job of making game-changing plays. The junior finished third on the team in tackles, but missed too many chances to dramatically alter games. Jenkins intercepted one pass, but had six others hit him in the hands and fall to the ground.

UF's third returning starter at linebacker, senior Lerentee McCray, will likely begin the season playing in place of Powell. McCray proved his value by making 7.5 tackles behind the line last season, despite missing four games with a shoulder injury. The Gators also have a pair of talented young linebackers in sophomore Michael Taylor and true freshman Antonio Morrison, who enrolled early.

Florida is arguably as deep in the secondary as any team in the SEC, bringing back its top seven tacklers in the defensive backfield from a season ago. Strong safety Matt Elam leads the way. The junior was brilliant last season, leading the team in tackles behind the line with 11. Elam also led UF in interceptions, pass break ups and forced fumbles. He was second in tackles.

Free safety Josh Evans plays sound and was the team's fifth-leading tackler last season. He'll fight for the job with sophomore De'Ante Saunders, who impressed as a true freshman.

While UF has plenty of bodies to keep competition strong, there isn't an established star among the cornerbacks. Marcus Roberson has the makings of one after starting 10 games as a true freshman before suffering a season-ending neck injury. Cody Riggs, Loucheiz Purifoy and Jaylen Watkins have stood out at times.

SPECIAL TEAMS

This should be a strength.

Kicker Caleb Sturgis was a finalist for the Lou Groza Award last season, making 22 of 26 field-goal attempts with a long of 55 yards. The senior has made 46 field goals in his career, the second-

BEST & BRIGHTEST

MOST VALUABLE PLAYER

SS Matt Elam

Excellent play-making ability at the line of scrimmage for a defensive back. ... The 5-10, 210-pound Elam led UF in tackles behind the line last season with 11. He also led the Gators in interceptions (tied for lead), pass breakups and forced fumbles. ... Always active, Elam was second on the team in tackles with 78 and was one of five Florida defenders to record multiple sacks. ... The unquestioned leader of Florida's secondary; he plays his assignments well and is a sure tackler.

EMERGING STAR

RB Mike Gillislee

Tremendous cutting ability with needed speed around the edge make the 5-11, 201-pounder a threat against any defense. ... After having trouble with blitz pickup last season, he seems to have found his all-around game as a senior. ... Earned constant praise in spring drills and was named the Offensive Player of the Day in UF's first spring scrimmage. ... Has ran for 920 career yards, including 328 last season. ... Has averaged 6.3 yards per carry in his career.

TOP NEWCOMER

LB Antonio Morrison

An instinctual and aggressive young backer with the physical ability to knock runners back. ... The 6-1, 216-pound true freshman enrolled early to compete in spring drills and recorded nine tackles in the spring game. ... The Bolingbrook, Ill., native drew raves from coach Will Muschamp during spring practice and will be an instant contributor this fall. ... Was considered a four-star prospect and the nation's 10th-best inside linebacker by Rivals.com coming out of high school.

2009 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	35.8	10
Rushing	221.8	10
Passing	236.1	41
Total	457.8	6
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	12.4	4
Rushing	99.8	12
Passing	152.8	2
Total	252.6	4
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 7	+ 0.5	24

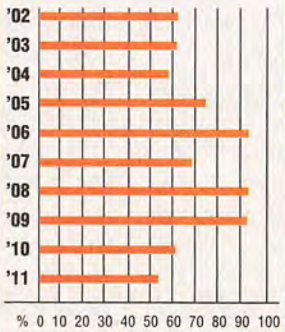
2010 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	29.9	43
Rushing	166.5	44
Passing	184.3	88
Total	350.9	82
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	21.3	29
Rushing	130.6	31
Passing	175.9	12
Total	306.5	9
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 2	+ 0.15	47

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	25.5	71
Rushing	143.0	73
Passing	185.7	89
Total	328.7	105
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	20.3	20
Rushing	132.7	40
Passing	166.9	7
Total	299.5	8
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
- 12	- 0.92	113

10-YEAR WINNING TREND



RESULTS

7-6, 3-5

W	FAU	41-3
W	UAB	39-0
W	TENNESSEE	33-23
W	at Kentucky	48-10
L	ALABAMA	10-38
L	at LSU	11-41
L	at Auburn	6-17
L	GEORGIA	20-24
W	VANDERBILT	26-21
L	at South Carolina	12-17
W	FURMAN	54-32
L	FLORIDA STATE	7-21
	Gator Bowl	
W	vs. Ohio State	24-17

PLAYER PROFILE

Latroy Pittman
Photo by Tim Casey-Fla Athletic Dept.

He Can't Talk About It, But Pittman Can Play

Florida freshman receiver Latroy Pittman, who enrolled early in January, wasn't hyped as an elite recruit. But he delivered like a prime prospect this spring.

The 6-0, 201-pound Pittman capped an impressive 15 days of practice by catching two passes for 51 yards in the spring game in front of an estimated 38,100 fans.

Pittman's first catch from quarterback Jacoby Brissett covered 43 yards, as he easily beat man coverage on the outside deep downfield. The long reception came on 3rd-and-8 and led to the game's first touchdown.

Pittman's day could have been even greater. Later in the game, Brissett overthrew him after he easily beat the secondary for what likely would have been a 55-yard touchdown.

UF does not allow freshmen to speak to the media, so Pittman couldn't comment on his progress. However, his coach and teammates were eager to talk about the emerging standout.

"He's done a nice job, he really has," said coach Will Muschamp, who named Pittman the Offensive Player of the Day in the team's second scrimmage following the third week of drills.

"He's a hard worker. Football is important to him. We had him in camp a year ago. We really liked him. We liked him at receiver. We liked him at defensive back. He's a talented young man. He's physical. He's tough. He's got ball instincts. He's got play-making ability, so we're very pleased with his progress."

UF missed out on signing five-star receiver prospects Stefon Diggs and Nelson Agholor in February, but Pittman might soon make every Gators fan forget that duo.

"He's been showing us he can make plays," Brissett said. "The only thing we can do is just throw the ball up and give him a chance. He's capitalized on his opportunity."

Even Florida's veteran receivers have been impressed with Pittman's ability to quickly adapt to college and succeed at a high level.

"The guy just makes plays," said redshirt sophomore receiver Quinton Dunbar. "That's all I can say. He's very good."

Florida heads into the fall desperatly needing receivers to elevate their play. No returning receiver caught more than 16 passes last season.

"He's played as well as anybody from his very first practice," sophomore fullback Hunter Joyer said. "He's always been incredible out there. He's a guy we will really count on this year. It was great to see him come through in front of a big crowd (in the spring game)."

best mark in school history.

The punting duties will be manned by Kyle Christy. The sophomore spilt time last season, punting a team-leading 30 times for an average of 40.9 yards. Muschamp praised Christy's improvement this spring.

Florida also has a dangerous return game, led by receiver Andre Debose. The junior has returned three kickoffs for touchdowns in just 40 career attempts. He was named the Gator Bowl MVP after returning a kick 99 yards for a touchdown in Florida's win over Ohio State.

SCHEDULE ANALYSIS

The schedule is kinder to the Gators this season, although still difficult.

Florida will know what kind of team it has early on with two challenging road tests. UF heads to Texas A&M in Week 2 in the Aggies' Southeastern Conference debut. A trip to Tennessee follows in Week 3.

After the Tennessee game, Florida only leaves the state once (Vanderbilt on Oct. 13). While a home date against LSU on Oct. 6 is crucial, Florida's SEC East fortunes will play out over a three-week stretch.

The Gators host South Carolina on Oct. 20, face Georgia in Jacksonville and then welcome SEC rookie Missouri to The Swamp on Nov. 3. After two cupcake games, UF concludes the regular season with a date at Florida State on Nov. 24.

UF misses Alabama, Arkansas and Auburn.

— Hays Carlyon

SCHEDULE

Date	Opponent	'11 Record
Sept. 1	BOWLING GREEN	5-7
Sept. 8	at Texas A&M	7-6
Sept. 15	at Tennessee	5-7
Sept. 22	KENTUCKY	5-7
Oct. 6	LSU	13-1
Oct. 13	at Vanderbilt	6-7
Oct. 20	SOUTH CAROLINA	11-2
Oct. 27	vs. Georgia (Jacksonville)	10-4
Nov. 3	MISSOURI	8-5
Nov. 10	LOUISIANA	9-4
Nov. 17	JACKSONVILLE STATE	7-4
Nov. 24	at Florida State	9-4

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GEORGIA BULLDOGS

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OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Mike Bobo | **DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Todd Grantham** | **STADIUM: Sanford Stadium 92,746**

AT A GLANCE

2011:
10-4 overall, 7-1 SEC (1st, East)

COACH:
Mark Richt — At Georgia and overall: 106-38, 11 years

RETURNING STARTERS:
15; 6 offense, 9 defense

PLAYERS TO WATCH:
QB Aaron Murray, RB Isaiah Crowell, WR/CB Malcolm Mitchell, WR Tavarres King, LB Jarvis Jones, LB Alec Ogletree, S Bacarri Rambo, NT John Jenkins

PRIMARY STRENGTHS:
The defense was among the best in the country and should be even better. Murray is a third-year starter and has plenty of playmakers. There's finally depth in the backfield. Dawgs should have multiple defenders vying for All-America honors.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS:
The offensive line has to be rebuilt, and there are more guards than tackles. A bruising fullback is a key blocker in Richt's offense, and Zander Ogletree is a bit undersized. The running game must be established to win the big games.

KEY LOSSES:
C Ben Jones, OT Cordy Glenn, TE Orson Charles, CB/KR Brandon Boykin

OVERVIEW:
The Dawgs have the talent, experience and accommodating schedule to win the East again. Taking that next step and winning the SEC against a monster from the West is another matter. Their inability to play the power game cost them against LSU and Michigan State.

Loaded with Talent, Dawgs Seek Respect Beyond SEC

As he had done the year before with Brandon Boykin and Cordy Glenn, Mark Richt spent as much attention recruiting several key returning players as he did hauling in another talented class.

While tight end Orson Charles left for the NFL, All-America safety Bacarri Rambo and quarterback Aaron Murray checked into their draft status and decided to stay. Several others — most notably All-America linebacker Jarvis Jones — ignored the temptation altogether.

"I thought that was real healthy for our team, to have a bunch of guys who kind of made the decision all over again: 'Is Georgia where they needed to be?'" Richt said. "And the answer was yes. I saw that as a real positive for our program."

Positive indeed. A year ago, the talk surrounding Georgia football was whether Richt could survive his first real crisis. Now, following a 10-4 season that included the fifth SEC Eastern Division championship under Richt, the talk is back to on-the-field matters.

Specifically, are the Bulldogs ready to join the national championship hunt?

Those signs are positive as well.

Even with Charles leaving, the Dawgs return six starters on offense and nine on a defense that became a force and didn't allow LSU a single first down in the first half of the SEC Championship Game. The Dream Team recruiting class of 2011 is starting to grow up, and the newest class, though less heralded, figures to make an immediate impact.

"The best chance you have to win," Richt said, "is for everybody to be bought in, for everybody to be working together and believing, doing their part, doing what it takes in the offseason."

Add defensive coordinator Todd Grantham's name to that list of valuable returnees. Grantham, who has turned the Dawgs' defense around in just two seasons, might have been able to parlay his success into an NFL gig or head coaching job at the college level somewhere. Instead, Grantham signed a two-year contract extension through 2014.

The Dawgs showed signs of developing a dominant defense last season, finishing fifth nationally in total defense.

"We've just got to finish a little bit better," Richt said.

"I think all the ingredients are there, I really do. They've had a taste of what it's like to play good defense, and I think they want to become even better."

OFFENSE

The strength of the offense is the passing game. Junior Aaron Murray established himself last season as an emerging star.

He has an abundance of receiving weapons, led by senior Tavarres King and sophomore Malcolm Mitchell. Chris Conley and Michael Bennett, two other sophomores, made excellent progress last season. Senior Marlon Brown provides leadership and depth. Senior Rantavious Wooten has big-play ability but needs to become more reliable.

At tight end, Orson Charles' early departure for the NFL opens the door for redshirt freshman Jay Rome, one of the cornerstones of the 2011 signing class, to compete with Arthur Lynch. Rome might not be the deep threat Charles was, but he's stronger and extremely athletic.

Georgia fans would love to see Mike Bobo's offense display a turnaround similar to Todd Grantham's defense.

Jarvis Jones
Photo by Joe Robbins

Although the Dawgs ranked 33rd in the nation in scoring at 32 points per game, their deficiencies were most evident in their four losses. They had the same number of turnovers as offensive touchdowns — 11 each in those games. Three of those TDs came on plays of 50 to 80 yards.

The absence of a power running game was their most noticeable weakness. Although running back Isaiah Crowell was the SEC Freshman of the Year, he was a non-factor in losses to LSU and Michigan State. Lack of depth at running back left Richt and Bobo with limited options.

Depth shouldn't be the problem this year. The Dawgs signed Keith Marshall, widely regarded as the top freshman running back in the country, and he enrolled early and went through spring practice. They also signed Todd Gurley, a tough-nosed runner who was the No. 2 running back in North Carolina behind Marshall. So Crowell will have to fight just to get on the field.

Senior Richard Samuel and sophomore Ken Malcome are tough inside runners who provide depth.

Of course, power running starts up front. For the second year in a row, the Dawgs must rebuild the offensive line without tackles Cordy Glenn and Justin Anderson, and center Ben Jones. Tight ends Charles and Aron White also are gone. There's a lot of competition for playing time, and the starting unit won't be set until preseason practice.

About all that's certain is that David Andrews will take over at center. Kenarious Gates, who had been a guard, made an impression at left tackle. Kolton Houston, Dallas Lee and Chris Burnette played well at guard. Mark Beard was signed from Coffeyville (Kan.) Community College to provide some instant experience.

True freshman John Theus is expected to push for a starting job at tackle. Another true freshman, Chester Brown, and redshirt freshmen Zach DeBell and Xzavier Ward all have a chance.

DEFENSE

Statistically, Georgia's defense in coordinator Todd Grantham's second year was right behind Alabama and LSU. Even if that may be a little misleading given the offenses Georgia faced, the fact that the comparison warrants discussion shows how vastly improved the Dawgs are under Grantham.

There's plenty of reason to believe the defense will be among the best in the nation this season. The Bulldogs return 20 of their top 22 players on defense, losing two starters in cornerback Brandon Boykin and end Deangelo Tyson.

The 3-4 defense is predicated on an anchor in the middle at nose, and the Dawgs return two. John Jenkins made great strides last year and could be the

Isaiah Crowell
Photo by Michael Wade

SCOUTING REPORT: Offense

POS	STARTER	YR.	COMMENT	BACKUP/KEY DEPTH
QB	Aaron Murray*	Jr.	Has 6,198 passing yards in two seasons.	Christian LeMay, Fr.
RB	Isaiah Crowell*	So.	Productive but inconsistent as a freshman.	Keith Marshall, Fr.
FB	Zander Ogletree	So.	A little undersized but a hard-nosed blocker.	Quayvon Hicks, Fr.
WR	Tavarres King*	Sr.	Had a strong finish in '11; needs to be a leader.	Michael Bennett, So.
WR	Malcolm Mitchell*	So.	Team's best deep-threat, 45 catches last year.	Chris Conley, So.
TE	Arthur Lynch	Jr.	Great blocker and adequate receiver.	Jay Rome, Fr.
LT	Kenarious Gates*	Jr.	Solidified position with a fine spring.	John Theus, Fr.
LG	Kolton Houston	So.	Would have started last year but was ineligible.	Dallas Lee, Jr.
C	David Andrews	So.	Prepped behind four-year starter Ben Jones.	Chris Burnette, Jr.
RG	Chris Burnette*	Jr.	The emerging leader of the offensive line.	Greg Pyke, Fr.
RT	John Theus	Fr.	Five-star recruit expected to win a starting job.	Mark Beard, Jr.
K	Marshall Morgan	Fr.	Booted 46-yard game-winner in Semper Fi Bowl.	Jamie Lindley, Sr.

*Returning Starter

SCOUTING REPORT: Defense

POS	STARTER	YR.	COMMENT	BACKUP/KEY DEPTH
DE	Abry Jones*	Jr.	Often overlooked but has All-SEC potential.	Garrison Smith, Jr.
NT	John Jenkins*	Sr.	Immovable force in the middle.	Kwame Geathers, Jr.
DE	Cornelius Washington*	Jr.	Ex-starter at OLB; provides speed off the edge.	Ray Drew, So.
LB	Chase Vasser	Jr.	Will have to hold off a pair of freshmen.	Josh Harvey-Clemons, Fr.
LB	Alec Ogletree*	Jr.	Flies around and hits hard; big-time playmaker.	Amarlo Herrera, So.
LB	Michael Gilliard*	Sr.	Had a breakthrough season last year.	Christian Robinson, Sr.
LB	Jarvis Jones*	Jr.	An almost unstoppable pass-rusher.	Jordan Jenkins, Fr.
CB	Sanders Commings*	Sr.	Suspended for first two games, but reliable on field.	Damian Swann, So.
CB	Branden Smith	Sr.	He's the Dawgs' fastest player on defense.	Malcolm Mitchell, So.
SS	Shawn Williams*	Jr.	A tough hitter and one of the primary leaders.	Marc Deas, So.
FS	Bacarri Rambo*	Sr.	Became a big-time playmaker last season.	Devin Bowman, Fr.
P	Collin Barber	Fr.	Averaged more than 43 yards per punt in HS.	Marshall Morgan, Fr.

*Returning Starter

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3 NEWCOMERS OF IMPACT

John Theus
A five-star prospect from Florida, Theus is exactly the type of player the Bulldogs need on the offensive interior in the rugged SEC. He's not only big, but plays with a high motor and a mean streak. A U.S. Army All-American, he was a high school legend in the Sunshine State, and should be able to hit the field early in Athens.

Josh Harvey-Clemons
Harvey-Clemons is one of the country's most intriguing signees. In high school, he was a standout at linebacker, receiver and safety. While safety was probably his best position, he is likely to be an outside 'backer in college because of his 6-5 frame. Don't be surprised if he's also a red zone receiver in college.

Todd Gurley
Gurley was among the most complete high school running backs in the country in 2011. He combines great size with excellent speed and a strong competitive spirit. Gurley is best between the tackles, but accelerates well and has the ability to break a long one. Simply put, he's a load to tackle.

THE SLEEPER

Sheldon Dawson
It wouldn't be a shock to see Dawson become a multi-year starter in Athens at cornerback. He's a little raw at this point, but there is no denying he is among the most well-rounded athletes in this Georgia class. Dawson could make an immediate impact on special teams because of his outstanding return abilities.

Committments	19
Average Stars	3.47
★★★★★	2
★★★★☆	6
★★★☆☆	10
★★☆☆☆	1
Total Stars	66
National Rank: 12	SEC: 4

2013 NEEDS: With Georgia expected to sign a very large class overall, there are plenty of areas which the Bulldogs will address. But the key ones are probably inside linebacker, the secondary and the offensive line. At inside 'backer, they possibly will sign three or more to help fill things out with their 3-4 defense. We also could see Georgia sign as many as six secondary players, with the need split pretty equally between corner and safety. The offensive line could have a handful of additions as well.

by Barton Simmons/Rivals.com

Name	Pos	Ht	Wt	Stars	Hometown	School
John Atkins	DT	6-4	300	★★★	Thomson, GA	Thomson
Rated as the No. 32 prospect in Georgia by Rivals.com...Rated as the nation's No. 40 defensive tackle... Participated in the Under Armour All-American Game.						
Collin Barber	K	6-2	191	★★	Cartersville, GA	Cartersville
Set a Cartersville (Ga.) High record with a 54-yard field goal...Committed to Georgia in summer before senior year.						
Faton Bauta	QB	6-3	225	★★★	West Palm Beach, FL	Dwyer
Rated as the No. 79 prospect in Florida by Rivals.com...Rated as the nation's No. 15 dual-threat quarterback...Enrolled at Georgia in January.						
Mark Beard	OL	6-4	290	★★★	Coffeyville, KS	Coffeyville C.C.
Chose Georgia over Mississippi State, Houston and others...Originally signed with Troy out of high school...Enrolled at Georgia in January.						
Josh Dawson	DE	6-4	225	★★★★	Tucker, GA	Tucker
Rated as the No. 22 prospect in Georgia by Rivals.com...Rated as the nation's No. 20 weakside defensive end...Switched to Georgia from his commitment to Vanderbilt on National Signing Day.						
Sheldon Dawson	ATH	5-11	169	★★★	Memphis, TN	Ridgeway
Rated as the No. 11 prospect in Tennessee by Rivals.com...Rated as the nation's No. 27 athlete...Originally committed to Memphis and chose Georgia over Ole Miss in the end.						
James Deloach	DE	6-3	260	★★★	Millen, GA	Jenkins County
Rated as the No. 56 prospect in Georgia by Rivals.com...Committed to Georgia along with Millen (Ga.) Jenkins County teammate Jonathan Taylor.						
Leonard Floyd	DE	6-4	215	★★★★	Eastman, GA	Dodge County
Rivals250 selection...Rated as the No. 12 prospect in Georgia...Rated as the nation's No. 13 weakside defensive end...Chose Georgia over Alabama.						
Todd Gurley	RB	6-1	195	★★★★	Tarboro, NC	Tarboro
Rivals100 selection...Rated as the No. 3 prospect in North Carolina...Rated as the nation's No. 5 running back...Participated in the Semper Fidelis All-American Bowl and the Shrine Bowl of the Carolinas.						
Josh Harvey-Clemons	ATH	6-5	208	★★★★★	Valdosta, GA	Lowndes
Rivals100 selection...Rated as the No. 1 prospect in Georgia...Rated as the nation's No. 2 athlete...Participated in the U.S. Army All-American Bowl.						

Name	Pos	Ht	Wt	Stars	Hometown	School
Quayvon Hicks	RB	6-2	245	★★★	Blackshear, GA	Pierce County
Rated as the No. 46 prospect in Georgia by Rivals.com...Rated as the nation's No. 2 fullback...Chose Georgia over offers from Georgia Tech, Tennessee, Miami and others.						
Jordan Jenkins	DE	6-3	245	★★★★	Hamilton, GA	Harris County
Rivals100 selection...Rated as the No. 3 prospect in Georgia...Rated as the nation's No. 6 weakside defensive end... Participated in the Under Armour All-American Game.						
Keith Marshall	RB	5-11	190	★★★★	Raleigh, NC	Millbrook
Rivals100 selection...Rated as the No. 4 prospect in North Carolina...Rated as the nation's No. 2 all-purpose back... Participated in the Under Armour All-American Game...Enrolled at Georgia in January.						
Marshall Morgan	K	6-3	195	★★★	Miami, FL	American Heritage
Rated as the nation's No. 7 kicker by Rivals.com...Participated in the Semper Fidelis All-American Bowl.						
Greg Pyke	OL	6-6	315	★★★	Baltimore, MD	Boys Latin School
Rated as the No. 12 prospect in Maryland by Rivals.com...Rated as the nation's No. 29 offensive guard...Selected to compete in the Chesapeake Bowl.						
Ty Smith	TE	6-3	228	★★★	Moultrie, GA	Colquitt County
Rated as the No. 28 prospect in Georgia by Rivals.com...Rated as the nation's No. 12 tight end...Chose Georgia over Florida.						
Jonathan Taylor	DT	6-4	315	★★★★	Millen, GA	Jenkins County
Rivals100 selection...Rated as the No. 5 prospect in Georgia...Rated as the nation's No. 7 defensive tackle... Participated in the Under Armour All-American Game.						
John Theus	OL	6-6	292	★★★★★	Jacksonville, FL	Bolles
Rivals100 selection...Rated as the No. 3 prospect in Florida...Rated as the nation's No. 5 offensive tackle... Participated in the U.S. Army All-American Bowl.						
Blake Tibbs	WR	6-2	185	★★★	Lithonia, GA	Martin Luther King
Rated as the No. 33 prospect in Georgia by Rivals.com...Rated as the nation's No. 65 wide receiver...Participated in the Offense-Defense All-American Bowl.						

BULLDOGS SPRING ROSTER

No.	Name	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.	Hometown
61	David Andrews	OL	6-2	280	So.	Norcross
58	Sterling Bailey	DL	6-3	259	Fr.	Gainesville
10	Faton Bauta	QB	6-3	222	Fr.	West Palm Beach, FL
79	Mark Beard	OL	6-5	300	So.	Adamsville, AL
93	Patrick Beless	SP	5-9	155	Fr.	Atlanta
82	Michael Bennett	WR	6-3	208	So.	Alpharetta
7	Greg Bingham	QB	6-4	223	So.	Columbus
37	Devin Bowman	DB	6-0	175	Fr.	Rossville
81	Taylor Bradberry	WR	6-3	192	Sr.	Winder
15	Marlon Brown	WR	6-5	222	Sr.	Memphis, TN
68	Chris Burnette	OL	6-2	313	Jr.	LaGrange
41	Brandon Burrows	ILB	6-3	240	So.	Marietta
49	Corey Campbell	RB	5-10	210	So.	Hephzibah
4	Luis Capella	DB	5-10	176	Jr.	Augusta
19	Sanders Commings	DB	6-2	217	Sr.	Augusta
31	Chris Conley	WR	6-3	202	So.	Dallas
1	Isaiah Crowell	RB	5-11	215	So.	Columbus
78	Watts Dantzler	OL	6-7	310	So.	Dalton
32	James Davis	RB	5-11	215	Fr.	Baronton
25	Marc Deas	DB	6-1	197	So.	Kissimmee, FL
76	Zach DeBell	OL	6-6	273	Fr.	Tarpon Springs, FL
77	Caleb Drake	OL	6-1	275	Fr.	Hogansville
47	Ray Drew	DL	6-5	263	So.	Thomasville
91	Scott Eichler	SP	5-11	184	Sr.	Oakwood
6	Michael Erdman	WR	5-10	191	So.	Merritt Island, FL
97	Adam Erickson	SP	5-10	168	So.	Athens
95	Reuben Faloughi	OLB	6-5	255	Jr.	Martinez
69	Ty Frix	SP	6-0	213	Sr.	Calhoun
72	Kenarious Gates	OL	6-5	328	Jr.	Grantville
60	Wright Gazaway	SP	6-0	240	Fr.	Buford
99	Kwame Geathers	DL	6-6	350	Jr.	Georgetown, SC
35	Michael Gilliard	ILB	6-2	220	Sr.	Valdosta
43	Merritt Hall	RB	5-11	216	Fr.	Alpharetta
43	Quintavious Harrow	DB	5-11	183	So.	Columbus
20	Brandon Harton	RB	5-6	174	Jr.	Reidsville
12	Austin Herod	DB	5-10	191	Jr.	Woodstock
52	Amarlo Herrera	ILB	6-2	231	So.	College
75	Kolton Houston	OL	6-5	291	So.	Buford
90	Ethan Jackson	SP	5-11	182	Fr.	Sandersville
6	John Jenkins	DL	6-3	351	Sr.	Meriden, CT
98	Cody Johnson	SP	6-1	200	So.	Marietta
93	Abry Jones	DL	6-3	309	Sr.	Warner Robins
29	Jarvis Jones	OLB	6-3	241	Jr.	Columbus
7	Jesse Jones	DB	6-0	190	Fr.	Habersham
33	Kyle Karempelis	RB	5-9	180	So.	Roswell
12	Tavarres King	WR	6-1	192	Sr.	Mount Airy
64	Dallas Lee	OL	6-4	300	Jr.	Buford
16	Christian Lemay	QB	6-2	198	Fr.	Matthews, NC
99	Jamie Lindley	SP	5-11	177	Sr.	Savannah
74	Austin Long	OL	6-5	304	Jr.	Memphis, TN
66	Hunter Long	OL	6-4	300	So.	Memphis, TN
83	Jack Loonam	TE	6-0	215	Fr.	Lexington, SC
88	Ricky Lowe	DL	6-7	258	Sr.	Duluth
88	Arthur Lynch	TE	6-5	272	Jr.	Dartmouth, MA
24	Ken Malcome	RB	6-0	226	So.	Decatur
4	Keith Marshall	RB	5-11	202	Fr.	Raleigh, NC
14	Hutson Mason	QB	6-3	196	Jr.	Marietta
47	Taylor Maxey	RB	5-10	220	Fr.	Statham
46	AJ McDonald	ILB	6-0	240	So.	Suwanee
25	Rhett McGowan	WR	6-0	190	Jr.	Calhoun
70	Eddie McQuillen	OL	6-8	264	Fr.	Newnan
26	Malcolm Mitchell	DB	6-1	184	So.	Valdosta
39	Corey Moore	DB	6-2	207	So.	Griffin
92	Dexter Morant	OLB	6-7	245	So.	Manning, SC
45	Ben Mozingo	RB	6-0	225	Fr.	Alpharetta
27	Greg Mulkey	TE	6-3	230	Fr.	Fairmount
11	Aaron Murray	QB	6-1	211	Jr.	Tampa, FL
11	Connor Norman	DB	5-10	208	So.	Duluth
9	Alec Ogletree	ILB	6-3	236	Jr.	Newnan
46	Alexander Ogletree	RB	5-10	224	Jr.	Newnan
23	Alex Parsons	RB	5-10	194	Jr.	Fayetteville
29	Jamal Payette	WR	6-3	183	Fr.	Cleveland
18	Bacarri Rambo	DB	6-0	218	Sr.	Donalsonville
85	Geoff Rapp	TE	6-3	230	Fr.	Kennesaw
20	Lucas Redd	DB	6-1	210	Fr.	Jefferson
55	Ben Reynolds	OL	6-2	255	Jr.	Bainbridge
45	Christian Robinson	ILB	6-2	226	Sr.	Norcros
87	Jay Rome	TE	6-6	254	Fr.	Valdosta
42	Dustin Royston	RB	5-11	242	Jr.	Royston
3	Blake Sailors	DB	5-11	186	Jr.	Athens
22	Richard Samuel, IV	RB	6-2	243	Sr.	Cartersville
86	Justin Scott-Wesley	WR	5-11	218	Fr.	Camilla
5	Ben Shelton	QB	6-1	180	Fr.	Wayland, MA
1	Branden Smith	DB	5-11	176	Sr.	Atlanta
56	Garrison Smith	DL	6-3	294	Jr.	Atlanta
44	T.J. Stripling	OLB	6-6	222	Jr.	Decatur
5	Damian Swann	DB	5-11	177	So.	Atlanta
59	Nathan Theus	SP	6-3	254	Fr.	Jacksonville, FL
96	Mike Thornton	DL	6-1	287	So.	Stone Mountain
33	Chase Vasser	OLB	6-3	227	Jr.	Gainesville
48	Kosta Vavlas	ILB	6-0	219	So.	Tarpon Springs, FL
63	Xzavier Ward	OL	6-7	264	Fr.	Moultrie
83	Cornelius Washington	DL	6-4	269	Sr.	Hephzibah
2	Parker Welch	QB	6-3	204	So.	Jesup
89	Daniel Williams	TE	6-2	220	Fr.	Lawrenceville
84	Hugh Williams	TE	6-5	254	So.	Atlanta
36	Shawn Williams	DB	6-1	220	Sr.	Damascus
44	Drew Wilson	TE	6-2	206	Jr.	Tignall
51	Ramik Wilson	OLB	6-2	224	So.	Tampa, FL
17	Rantavious Wooten	WR	5-10	185	Jr.	Belle Glade, FL
9	Curtis Wyatt	WR	6-1	195	So.	Locust Grove
35	Chris Young	RB	6-1	230	Jr.	Hinesville

INDIVIDUAL STATS

PASSING

	GP	Effic	Cmp	Att	Int	Pct	Yards	TD	Long	Avg/G
A. Murray	14	146.41	238	403	14	59.1	3,149	35	80	224.9
H. Mason	4	153.12	18	30	0	60.0	254	2	46	63.5

RECEIVING

	GP	No.	Yards	Avg	TD	Long	Avg/G
T. King	14	47	705	15.0	8	80	50.4
M. Mitchell	11	45	665	14.8	4	71	60.5
O. Charles	14	45	574	12.8	5	36	41.0

RUSHING

	GP	Att	Gain	Loss	Net	Avg	TD	Long	Avg/G
I. Crowell	12	185	901	51	850	4.6	5	29	70.8
C. Thomas	10	73	370	9	361	4.9	2	27	36.1
B. Harton	5	53	255	8	247	4.7	1	27	49.4

DEF. LEADERS

Tackles: S. Williams 72, J. Jones 70, M. Gilliard 65
Tackles for loss: J. Jones 19.5, B. Boykin 11, A. Ogletree 7.5
Sacks: J. Jones 13.5, C. Washington 5, A. Jones 4
Interceptions: B. Rambo 8, S. Williams 4, B. Boykin 3

NOTEBOOK

While the rebuilding of the offensive line received the most attention in spring practice, coach **Mark Richt** has expressed more concern about another aspect of the game — special teams.

The Bulldogs were atrocious in that area last season, whether it was surrendering fake punts or long returns or blowing field goals.

"That's where we can probably make the most improvement across the board," Richt said. "We had some really good things happen on special teams, but we also had some pretty devastating things happen on special teams."

Depth concerns prompted the coaches to refrain from using many starters on special teams. That will not be the case this year.

"We've got to make sure we've got the right personnel on these teams," Richt said.

"We were trying to bite the bullet on some of these young guys. They were athletic, but they were young and inexperienced. So after biting the bullet with those guys, we think they will be better. But we also have to make sure we pull from (every) area of the football team.

"Nobody is going to be immune or nobody is going to have an excuse not to try to get on a special team. We want everybody to try to get involved. We're going to have kind of an all-hands-on-deck approach to the special teams as far as our personnel."

• Incoming freshman offensive lineman **John Theus** is expected to push for a starting job. But it might not be at left tackle, as originally projected. Junior **Kenarious Gates**, who moved there from guard, was another spring standout.

• Another incoming freshman who could win a starting job is fullback **Quayvon Hicks**, who is 6-2, 245.

"He's a pretty big, sturdy man," Richt said.

"Real powerful. He's got some bulk. Some guys looked at him as a defensive lineman. Very quick, very sudden, very physical. Great attitude. He will definitely get in there and compete. That's a very physical position. Down after down after down, you are just running into linebackers. That's not an easy job to sustain over time. So you better have a couple of them."

OPPOSING COACHES VIEW

• **On Georgia's defense:** "Georgia, to me, is the most talented defense in the league, no question. The state of Georgia, talent wise, yields more top players than any state in the South, even more than Florida. ... Very fast. That defense is starting to look like the talent they had with their runs of first-round draft picks."

• **On head coach Mark Richt:** "I think Coach Richt is one of the gentlemen of the game, a class act. He represents football in the correct way. ... I don't think people appreciate Mark Richt. He is one of most underrated coaches in the league. He's done a great job there. Mark Richt and (offensive coordinator) Mike Bobo, they know what they're doing offensively. They can throw some things at you. When they click, they can be very good offensively."

Bacarri Rambo
Photo by Michael Wade

premier nose tackle in the SEC this season. But he's not that far ahead of Kwame Geathers. The two 350-pounders not only give the Dawgs depth at that critical position, but also form a daunting goal-line defense tandem.

Geathers may see action at end just to get him on the field and spell Abry Jones and Garrison Smith. Cornelius Washington and Ray Drew moved to end from outside linebacker, making the front seven even faster.

They were moved because the Dawgs are loaded at linebacker, led by Jarvis Jones, who led the SEC in sacks last year with 13.5. Because he redshirted in 2010 after transferring from Southern California, Jones could have left for the NFL and likely would have been drafted high. But Jones' self-assessment was more critical than anyone's. He wanted to play another season at Georgia and improve his speed.

The scary thing for opposing offenses is that Jones might not even be Georgia's most gifted linebacker. Alec Ogletree, a junior who moved from strong safety to one of the inside backer spots, is one of the fastest players in the country at that position. He missed half of last season with a broken foot, but should be primed for a breakout season.

Seniors Christian Robinson and Michael Gilliard and sophomore Amarlo Herrera will battle for the other starting job, but all will contribute a lot regardless of who starts.

Freshmen Josh Harvey-Clemons and Jordan Jenkins should compete to start at the other outside linebacker opposite Jones.

The secondary has plenty of talent and experience, but the loss of Boykin leaves some concerns.

The simple solution will be for sophomore Damian Swann to step in for Boykin. But Grantham is a big believer in determining his 11 best players and finding a way to get them on the field. That might mean flipping Branden Smith, who backed up Sanders Commings, to the other side. Wide receiver Malcolm Mitchell worked extensively at cornerback and is a natural, but the coaches would prefer to limit his playing time on defense.

All-American Bacarri Rambo and Shawn Williams are set at the safeties, and Commings can play there as well.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Losing both kickers can be daunting. But the Bulldogs were uncharacteristically poor on special teams last season, so poor that fans implored Richt to hire a special teams coach rather than split the duties among the staff. Blair Walsh

BEST & BRIGHTEST

MOST VALUABLE PLAYER

QB Aaron Murray

Murray set a school record with 35 touchdown passes last season, and his 3,149 passing yards was best by a Bulldog sophomore. ... He ranked second in the SEC in passing (224.9 yards per game), second in total offense (232.9) and fifth in passing efficiency (146.4 rating). ... Very accurate on deep balls. ... Has thrown for 59 touchdowns in his first two seasons.

EMERGING STAR

LB Alec Ogletree

A broken foot in the opener against Boise State set him back last season after moving from strong safety. ... He managed to play in eight games, all starts, making 52 tackles, including 7.5 for loss. He forced three fumbles. ... It's very realistic for him to have a breakthrough season and join Jarvis Jones and Bacarri Rambo as All-Americans on the Georgia defense... Ogletree might be the best athlete on the defense.

TOP NEWCOMER

RB Keith Marshall

Even if Isaiah Crowell holds the starting job, Marshall should make an impact due to of his speed. If Crowell slips up, he could find himself watching Marshall run the ball. ... Enrolling early and going through spring practice helped Marshall's chances. ... Rivals.com rated Marshall the second-best running-back prospect in the nation after a high school career in North Carolina in which he rushed for 4,552 yards and 55 touchdowns.

2009 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	28.9	51
Rushing	161.0	47
Passing	201.2	80
Total	362.2	75
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	25.9	63
Rushing	126.2	36
Passing	213.2	51
Total	339.4	38
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
- 16	- 1.23	118

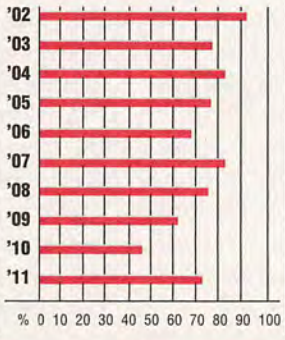
2010 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	32.1	30
Rushing	142.6	73
Passing	242.4	40
Total	385.0	56
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	22.1	36
Rushing	147.2	56
Passing	181.3	17
Total	328.5	23
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 10	+ 0.77	19

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	32.0	33
Rushing	164.0	49
Passing	244.5	48
Total	408.5	39
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	20.6	23
Rushing	101.2	11
Passing	176.0	10
Total	277.2	5
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 7	+ 0.50	26

10-YEAR WINNING TREND

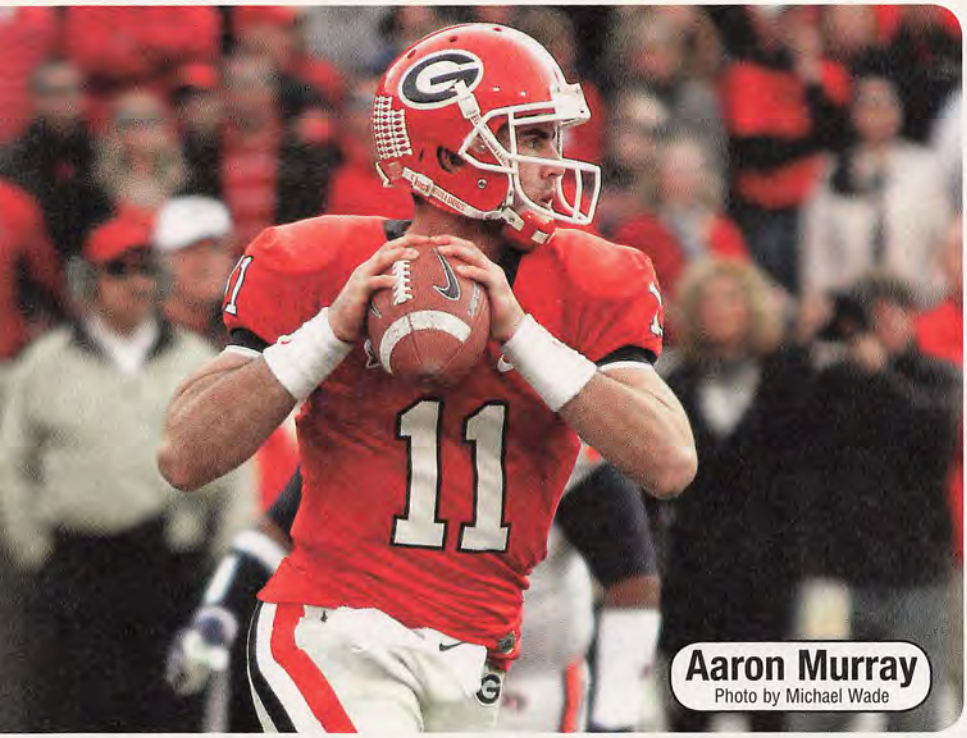


RESULTS

10-4, 7-2

L	BOISE STATE	21-35
L	SOUTH CAROLINA	42-45
W	COASTAL CAROLINA	59-0
W	at Ole Miss	27-13
W	MISSISSIPPI STATE	24-10
W	at Tennessee	20-12
W	at Vanderbilt	33-28
W	at Florida	24-20
W	NEW MEXICO STATE	63-16
W	AUBURN	45-7
W	KENTUCKY	19-10
W	at Georgia Tech	31-17
	SEC Championship	
L	vs. LSU	10-42
	Outback Bowl	
L	vs. Michigan State (3OT)	30-33

PLAYER PROFILE



Aaron Murray
Photo by Michael Wade

Already a Georgia Great, Murray Can Still Grow

As Aaron Murray climbed toward the top in several statistical categories last season, it became easy to overlook something that should be very encouraging.

Murray still has half of his college career to play. Logically speaking, it should be the better half.

"I think he can be better, there's no doubt," said Georgia coach Mark Richt.

"Quarterbacks are measured, to a certain degree, by the number of wins and championships, things of that nature, so he's got some room to grow in that area. Just from a statistical point of view, his touchdown to interception ratio (59-22 for his career) is pretty good, but I think he could be even better. I think he can protect the ball and make even better decisions than he made a year ago.

"I think his deep ball accuracy improved a lot, but I think it can get better. Not taking anything away from the guy because I think he's a great player and a great leader, but I think he realizes there's still room to grow and improve."

As a sophomore, Murray set the school record with 35 touchdowns passes. He needs just nine TD throws to pass Eric Zeier for second place in school history and 14 to break Matthew Stafford's school record. His 3,149 passing yards ranks tops by a sophomore. He's on pace to break David Greene's SEC record of 11,270 yards of total offense.

Yet, Murray felt even more confident going through his fourth spring practice.

"I could see the difference the first day of practice," Murray said. "I know the offense. I'm not worried about my footwork or my progressions. All of that is second nature now."

As an upperclassman, Murray is the undisputed leader of the offense.

"I definitely think my role as a leader has grown every year," Murray said. "I'm pretty much one of the older guys on the team now."

"Quarterback position just by nature is a leadership position," Richt said. "But when you have some credibility that goes along with that positional title, it goes a long way."

Murray is only 6-1, so naturally, he studies New Orleans Saints star Drew Brees, who's about the same height.

"He's always in a good position to throw the ball," Murray said. "You're not throwing over people; you're throwing through passing lanes. It's all about balance. It's something I've got to keep working on."

set a school record with 14 missed field goal attempts. So the bar has been set fairly low for highly recruited freshman Marshall Morgan.

Freshman Collin Barber, who averaged better than 43 yards a punt in high school, caught Richt's attention in an unusual way. Richt looked out his window one day and wondered why Drew Butler was booming punts. Turns out it was Barber, and Richt offered him a scholarship on the spot.

Barber also kicked a 54-yard field goal, so he provides some emergency depth behind Morgan.

SCHEDULE ANALYSIS

Nobody benefitted from conference expansion more than the Bulldogs. They were due to add Alabama. Instead, the Dawgs will play Missouri in their SEC opener Sept. 8. So for the second straight year, the Dawgs avoid the top three teams from the West — Bama, LSU and Arkansas.

The South Carolina game was moved back to Oct. 6. So with a September schedule of Buffalo, Missouri, Florida Atlantic, Vanderbilt and Tennessee — all in Athens except for the Mizzou game — the Dawgs could be undefeated and ranked near the top of the polls when they travel to Columbia.

That's followed by an open date, then a trip to Kentucky. Heading into the Florida game Oct. 27, being undefeated is very realistic.

— Guerry Clegg

SCHEDULE

Date	Opponent	'11 Record
Sept. 1	BUFFALO	3-9
Sept. 8	at Missouri	8-5
Sept. 15	FAU	1-11
Sept. 22	VANDERBILT	6-7
Sept. 29	TENNESSEE	5-7
Oct. 6	at South Carolina	11-2
Oct. 20	at Kentucky	5-7
Oct. 27	vs. Florida (Jacksonville)	7-6
Nov. 3	OLE MISS	2-10
Nov. 10	at Auburn	8-5
Nov. 17	GEORGIA SOUTHERN	11-3
Nov. 24	GEORGIA TECH	8-5

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KENTUCKY WILDCATS

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OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Randy Sanders | **DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Rick Minter** | **STADIUM: Commonwealth Stadium: 67,942**

AT A GLANCE

2011:
5-7, 2-6 SEC (T-4th, East)

COACH:
Joker Phillips — At Kentucky and overall: 11-14, 2 years

RETURNING STARTERS:
12; 6 offense, 5 defense, kicker

PLAYERS TO WATCH:
QB Maxwell Smith, WR La'Rod King, WR Demarco Robinson, OL Larry Warford, DT Mister Cobble, DT Donte Rumph, LB Alvin Dupree, S Martavius Neloms

PRIMARY STRENGTHS:
Kentucky seems to have found some potential playmakers on offense and in the return game. There is depth and versatility at key positions like tight end and running back. The defensive line returns most of its top players, which may give the rest of the youthful defense time to grow into new roles.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS:
Injuries on the offensive line or in the secondary could spell doom for UK. The Cats will rely on freshmen and redshirt freshmen to play key roles, which doesn't always work out well in the SEC. A difficult schedule could make all of the above even worse.

KEY LOSSES:
OG Stuart Hines, OT Chandler Burden, OT Billy Joe Murphy, LB Danny Trevathan, LB Ridge Wilson, LB Ronnie Sneed, S Winston Guy, P Ryan Tydlacka

OVERVIEW:
While some of last year's top players return, the Cats are still going to be relying on a young group to get wins in the unforgiving SEC. The schedule isn't going to help things either, with games against eight teams that played in bowl games last season, so sneaking into the postseason would be a nice accomplishment for UK.

Young but Promising, Cats Looking to Surprise

Kentucky sputtered its way through last season. At times, the Wildcats stalled altogether.

UK struggled to find any consistency on offense, finishing worst in the league in nearly every category, and the Cats worked their way through a difficult schedule with a new defensive scheme.

The result was a 5-7 record as UK failed to advance to a bowl game for the first time in five years. This offseason, coach Joker Phillips implored the fans to stick with him and his team. He pointed to potential in a close game at Georgia and an unlikely win over Tennessee for the first time in 26 tries.

"Don't give up on this football team," Phillips said this spring. "We'll battle; we'll fight; we'll scratch; we'll claw. Just don't give up on this football team."

If Kentucky is going to turn things around, it's going to have to be with a young roster — 50-plus players on next season's roster will have at least three years of eligibility remaining — that took its share of lumps in the Southeastern Conference last season.

Last season, UK played 11 true freshmen, which is rarely a recipe for success in the nation's best football conference.

But Phillips and his staff are hopeful that last season's lumps will provide a bump for this season.

A season ago, UK had to replace its starting quarterback, tailback and top two receivers. That lack of experience showed in the statistics with the Cats averaging league lows of 15.8 points and 259.8 yards a game.

Top players return at all of those positions, giving Phillips reason to feel optimistic. He seemed especially pleased with the play of quarterback Maxwell Smith, who started three games near the end of last season and gives UK a more accurate arm.

This spring, Smith found a big-time target in fellow sophomore Demarco Robinson, as well as redshirt freshman Daryl Collins. Smith also has a plethora of potential weapons in several different tight ends.

UK's defense will have youth issues to contend with this season. It lost the conference's two top tacklers and six starters in all. But don't count them out just yet, said sophomore Alvin "Bud" Dupree.

"We're going to be a surprise team," Dupree said. "We're going to get bigger, faster, stronger. ... We're going to be a good team and shock the world, shock the fans."

OFFENSE

There is no place to go but up for the Kentucky offense.

UK had the league's worst scoring offense and the worst passing offense, with the worst passing efficiency. It was the second-worst rushing team. The Cats gained the fewest first downs of any team in the conference and converted the fewest third downs.

The Cats had counted on young players with little true game experience to fill the shoes of their quarterback, tailback and top two receivers.

It didn't go well.

Morgan Newton struggled mightily at quarterback before suffering a season-ending shoulder injury. UK's running back group saw its top two runners coming into the season sidelined with various injuries. UK's receivers had a difficult time catching balls; when they did, they weren't able to break free for extra yardage.

Phillips hopes that run of poor offense will end this season with nearly every playmaker from last season returning and the development of some of last year's freshmen like quarterback Maxwell

La'Rod King
Photo by Mark Zerof-US PRESSWIRE

Smith (819 yards, four touchdowns), Demarco Robinson and Daryl Collins.

"I have a good understanding of the offense, a lot better than I did last year," Smith said. "I feel good, but we've got a lot of work to do. We can't stop. We could be a really good team, but it's about how much we'll dedicate ourselves to working hard."

The offense is still relying mostly on youth.

UK returns just one receiver, senior La'Rod King, who caught more than 10 passes or amassed more than 90 yards receiving last season. King finished last season with 40 catches for 598 yards and seven scores.

"We have some decent experience coming back with La'Rod King, but for the most part, we've got several guys we redshirted last year who are going to be playing for the first time," new receivers coach Pat Washington said. "We're sort of raw, but we have enough talent to be successful."

If Kentucky's tailbacks can stay healthy, they could be assets, with several players emerging from the bottom of the depth chart last season after injuries sidelined top runners Josh Clemons and Raymond Sanders, who will both be back.

Sanders and Clemons will compete for time with last season's surprises like CoShik Williams (486 yards, three touchdowns) and Jonathan George (208 yards, two scores), as well as two highly touted runners from the high school ranks.

The tight end position could be an asset; at least it was in the spring with big plays from several players vying for time — Ronnie Shields, Tyler Robinson and Anthony Kendrick.

While potential playmakers litter the Cats' roster, they'll have to make those plays behind a relatively inexperienced line, which lost three starters from last year and has little depth.

DEFENSE

Coordinator Rick Minter's multi-scheme defense is difficult for opponents to decipher, but it also takes a long time to learn.

He has said many times that the second season (which would be this year) is generally when his teams are able to fully function within the complex 4-3 and 3-4 defenses.

That may not be the case this season, though.

Kentucky lost six starters, including the SEC's top two tacklers in Danny Trevathan and Winston Guy. Cornerbacks Randall Burden and Anthony Mosley, as well as defensive leader Ronnie Sneed, a linebacker, are all gone. One of UK's most veteran linebackers, Ridge Wilson, was thrown off the team for a drug arrest. That's 449 tackles gone from last season's team.

"It's a lot different when you go from

Maxwell Smith
Photo by Jamie Rhodes-US PRESSWIRE

SCOUTING REPORT: Offense

POS	STARTER	YR.	COMMENT	BACKUP/KEY DEPTH
QB	Maxwell Smith	So.	Started in three games last season, showed promise.	Morgan Newton, Sr.*
RB	CoShik Williams*	Sr.	Former walk-on turned starter is undersized but tough.	R. Sanders, Jr./J. George, Jr.
RB	Josh Clemons	So.	One-time promising starter didn't go in spring (knee).	FB D.J. Warren, So.*
WR	La'Rod King*	Sr.	Team's only consistent true playmaker last season.	Daryl Collins, Fr.
WR	Demarco Robinson	So.	Drew rave reviews from coaches in spring.	Gene McCaskill, Sr.
TE	Ronnie Shields	So.	In crowded position, has elevated to top in spring.	Tyler Robinson, Jr.
LT	Darrian Miller	So.	Started two games in 2011, will have to take on bigger role.	Tyler Davenport, So.
LG	Zach West	Fr.	Will have to keep improving in position with little depth.	Teven Eatmon-Nared, So.
C	Matt Smith*	Sr.	Two-year starter needs to be vocal leader of young line.	Sam Simpson, Jr.
RG	Larry Warford*	Sr.	All-SEC performer will be anchor for inexperienced group.	Shaquille Love, Fr.
RT	Kevin Mitchell	Jr.	Making move from left guard to right tackle.	Trevino Woods, Sr.
K	Craig McIntosh*	Sr.	Consistent and steady, made 12 of 14 FGs last season.	Joe Mansour, Jr.

*Returning Starter

SCOUTING REPORT: Defense

POS	STARTER	YR.	COMMENT	BACKUP/KEY DEPTH
DE	Collins Ukwu*	Sr.	Limited by injuries in spring, coaches high on him.	Farrington Huguenin, Fr.
DT	Donte Rumph*	Jr.	Aggressive anchor for potential strength of team.	Christian Coleman, So.
DT	Mister Cobble*	Jr.	Strong, physical player that teams schemed around.	Tristian Johnson, Jr.
DE	Taylor Wyndham	Sr.	Quiet starter who has made big plays at key times.	TraVaughn Paschal, So.
LB	Alvin Dupree	So.	Bulked-up player could be next great defensive star.	Justin Henderson, So.
LB	Avery Williamson	Jr.	One of top returning tacklers, stood out in spring.	Tyler Brause, So.
LB	Malcolm McDuffen	So.	Young, raw talent who made big plays in spring.	Demarius Rancifer, Fr.
CB	Cartier Rice	Sr.	Playing bigger and more physical this season.	Eric Dixon, So.
CB	Marcus Caffey	Fr.	Moving from running back; has skills, build to be star.	Eric Simmons, So.
S	Mikie Benton*	Sr.	Strong knowledge of system could make him key leader.	Ashely Lowery, So.
S	Martavius Neloms*	Sr.	Team's top returning tackler; a key leader on defense.	Glenn Faulkner, So.
P	Landon Foster	Fr.	True frosh looks like best option to replace All-SEC punter.	Joe Mansour, Jr.

*Returning Starter

WILDCATS RECRUITING 2012

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3 NEWCOMERS OF IMPACT

Patrick Towles
Towles was the top prospect in Kentucky, and is a player around which the program can be built. This is a player with a big frame (he's 6-5) and a big arm. As a senior, Towles passed for more than 3,800 yards with 42 touchdowns and only one interception. He comes from a winning program, which is a bonus.

Zack Blaylock
Blaylock was among the top defensive playmakers in the South during the 2011 season. All told, the safety recorded double-digit interceptions, and took more than half of them all the way back for touchdowns. The son of former NBA player Mookie Blaylock, he was a great addition for the 'Cats.

Thomas Chapman
Chapman is a big, strong and physical defensive tackle who should help make Kentucky better on the defensive interior. The 6-4, 290-pounder can be explosive off the ball and is strong enough to effectively take on a double team. That should make him a valuable asset in Lexington.

THE SLEEPER

Demarcus Sweat
Sweat has major potential, but played for a run-oriented offense in high school and didn't get a ton of chances to showcase his skills. He's a big-bodied receiver who will be a difficult red zone matchup. He also has the speed and route running ability to stretch the field. The focus of his game is working on his consistency with his hands.

Committments	26
Average Stars	2.88
★★★★★	0
★★★★☆	1
★★★☆☆	21
★★☆☆☆	4
Total Stars	75
National Rank: NR	SEC: 14

2013 NEEDS: Kentucky is hoping to address needs at tight end and on the offensive line. This should be a smaller class (20 or less), but look for the Wildcats to bring in one or two tight ends since they didn't sign any in February. Given that Kentucky has older players at that position, this is a must in this cycle. From the 2012 team, Kentucky will lose three senior offensive linemen. Because of that, they will need to replenish there even though they signed four players in the most recent class.

by Keith Niebuhr/rivals.com

Name	Pos	Ht	Wt	Stars	Hometown	School
Daron Blaylock	DB	6-0	218	★★★	Marietta, GA	Walton
Joins twin brother Zack in Kentucky class...Chose Kentucky over Cincinnati, Duke, Illinois, Louisville and Maryland.						
Shawn Blaylock	DB	6-0	179	★★★	Stone Mountain, GA	Stephenson
Committed to UK along with Stone Mountain (Ga.) Stephenson teammate DeMarcus Sweat...Chose Kentucky over Illinois, Indiana and Memphis.						
Zack Blaylock	DB	5-11	185	★★★	Marietta, GA	Walton
Rated as the No. 45 prospect in Georgia by Rivals.com...Rated as the nation's No. 34 safety...Chose Kentucky over Cincinnati, Duke, Illinois, Louisville and Maryland.						
Kory Brown	DB	6-1	210	★★★	Decatur, MS	East Central C.C.
Has three years of eligibility after redshirting in 2011 while recovering from knee injury...Enrolled at Kentucky in January.						
Thomas Chapman	DT	6-4	290	★★★	Louisville, KY	DuPont Manual
Rated as the No. 3 prospect in Kentucky by Rivals.com...Rated as the nation's No. 30 defensive tackle...Chose Kentucky over Illinois.						
Landon Foster	K	6-2	180	★★	Franklin, TN	Independence
Earned first-team all-state honors in Tennessee...Made 11 of 16 field goals with a long of 49 yards...Named Most Valuable Player of his high school team.						
Patrick Graffree	DT	6-4	277	★★★	Elizabethtown, KY	Central Hardin
Rated as the No. 10 prospect in Kentucky by Rivals.com...Had 91 tackles, 10 tackles for loss, six sacks and an interception as a junior.						
Josh Harris	DB	6-1	200	★★★	Maysville, KY	Mason County
Rated as the No. 8 prospect in Kentucky by Rivals.com...Rushed for 2,848 yards and 42 touchdowns during his career.						
Khalid Henderson	LB	6-1	200	★★★	Austell, GA	Pebblebrook
Recorded 74 tackles and two interceptions as a senior...Originally committed to Tennessee before signing with Kentucky.						
T.J. Jones	OL	6-5	276	★★	Myrtle Beach, SC	Myrtle Beach
Rated as the No. 29 prospect in South Carolina by Rivals.com...Chose Kentucky over East Carolina.						
A.J. Legree	WR	6-0	180	★★★	Fort White, FL	Fort White
Chose Kentucky over offers from Miami, Florida International, Florida Atlantic, Iowa State, Troy and Western Kentucky...Participated in the FACA North-South All-Star Game.						
Dyshawn Mobley	RB	6-0	205	★★★	Powell, TN	Powell
Rated as the No. 23 prospect in Tennessee by Rivals.com...Rushed for 3,068 yards and 44 touchdowns as a senior.						
Zach Myers	OL	6-4	287	★★★	Miamisburg, OH	Miamisburg
Rated as the nation's No. 52 offensive guard by Rivals.com...Named second-team All-Southwest Ohio.						

Name	Pos	Ht	Wt	Stars	Hometown	School
Langston Newton	DE	6-5	240	★★★	Carmel, IN	Carmel
Rated as the No. 9 prospect in Indiana by Rivals.com...Rated as the nation's No. 40 strongside defensive end.						
Cody Quinn	DB	5-10	175	★★★	Middletown, OH	Middletown
Chose Kentucky over Cincinnati, Purdue, West Virginia and Illinois after originally committing to the Illini.						
Jonathan Reed	DB	5-10	178	★★★	Indianapolis, IN	Pike
Named to the juniors-only all-state team in 2010 by the Indiana Football Coaches Association.						
DeMarcus Sweat	WR	6-2	185	★★★	Stone Mountain, GA	Stephenson
Returned three punts and three kickoffs for touchdowns during senior season...Chose Kentucky over Indiana, Purdue and FIU.						
Jordan Swindle	OL	6-8	308	★★★	St. Johns, FL	Creekside
Helped lead team to 8-4 record and first state playoff win in school history as a senior... Chose Kentucky over Louisville, Southern Miss, Vanderbilt, West Virginia and others.						
Justin Taylor	RB	5-10	205	★★★	Atlanta, GA	North Atlanta
Rated as the No. 52 prospect in Georgia by Rivals.com...Originally committed to Alabama as a junior.						
Kadeem Thomas	LB	6-0	230	★★★	Tallahassee, FL	Godby
Rated as the nation's No. 39 inside linebacker by Rivals.com...Recorded 142 tackles as a senior.						
Fred Tiller	ATH	6-1	178	★★★	Homerville, GA	Clinch County
Rated as the No. 59 prospect in Georgia by Rivals.com...Rated as the nation's No. 45 athlete.						
Jon Toth	OL	6-5	290	★★	Indianapolis, IN	Brebeuf Jesuit Prep
Helped lead team to playoffs each year as a starter...Chose Kentucky over Ball State, Bowling Green, Central Michigan, Toledo and Western Michigan.						
Patrick Towles	QB	6-5	232	★★★★	Ft. Thomas, KY	Highlands
Rated as the No. 1 prospect in Kentucky by Rivals.com...Rated as the nation's No. 9 pro-style quarterback...Passed for 3,820 yards and 42 touchdowns as a senior.						
Jordan Watson	OL	6-4	285	★★★	Fayetteville, GA	Whitewater
Rated as the No. 57 prospect in Georgia by Rivals.com...Rated as the nation's No. 53 offensive guard.						
Jalen Whitlow	ATH	6-3	200	★★★	Prattville, AL	Prattville
Rated as the No. 32 prospect in Alabama by Rivals.com...Split time at quarterback and wide receiver.						
Sterling Wright	DB	6-1	205	★★	Charlotte, NC	North Carolina Tech
Played high school ball at Miami (Fla.) Coral Reef...Recorded 55 tackles and caused eight fumbles as a senior.						

WILDCATS SPRING ROSTER

No.	Name	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.	Hometown
87	Brian Adams	WR	6-4	223	Jr.	Cumming, GA
53	Matthew Adolph	LS	6-2	220	So.	Dublin, OH
30	Michael Arnold, Jr.	S	6-2	200	Fr.	Louisville
86	Jordan Aumiller	TE	6-4	241	Jr.	Danville
31	Mikie Benton	S	5-11	195	Sr.	Russellville
31	Derek Bishop	TB	5-7	193	Fr.	Louisville
27	Aaron Boyd	WR	6-4	220	Sr.	Lexington
10	Tyler Brause	LB	6-4	241	So.	Sycamore, OH
48	Calvin Brent	FB	5-10	230	Fr.	Louisville
34	Kory Brown	S	6-0	208	So.	Moncks Corner, SC
81	Kyle Budde	LS	6-6	225	So.	Mason, OH
15	Marcus Caffey	CB	5-11	200	Fr.	Atlanta, GA
21	Josh Clemons	TB	5-10	205	So.	Fayetteville, GA
7	Bookie Cobbins	WR	6-0	191	Fr.	New Orleans, LA
97	Mister Cobble	DT	6-0	331	Jr.	Louisville
92	Christian Coleman	DT	6-3	288	So.	Milan, TN
23	Daryl Collins	WR	5-11	202	Fr.	Gadsden, AL
84	Gabe Correll	TE	6-5	240	Sr.	Cincinnati, OH
81	Rashad Cunningham	WR	6-4	221	Fr.	Mobile, AL
62	Tyler Davenport	OT	6-5	330	So.	Hodgenville
60	Alvin Davis, Jr.	DT	6-4	245	So.	Jesup, GA
66	Nermin Delic	DT	6-5	280	So.	Dalton, GA
28	Eric Dixon	CB	5-11	184	So.	Mobile, AL
50	Mike Douglas	DE	6-4	269	So.	Largo, FL
73	Steven Duff	OG	6-0	331	Jr.	Louisville
26	Tre' Dunn	S	6-2	218	So.	Harrodsburg
2	Alvin Dupree	LB	6-4	247	So.	Irwinton, GA
76	Teven Eatmon-Nared	OG	6-7	342	So.	Bucyrus, OH
18	Glenn Faulkner	S	6-2	186	So.	East St. Louis, IL
19	E.J. Fields	WR	6-1	199	Sr.	Frankfort
8	Josh Forrest	S	6-3	226	Fr.	Paducah
29	Brandon Gainer	TB	5-11	207	So.	Miami, FL
25	Jonathan George	TB	5-10	216	Jr.	Lincoln, AL
64	Max Godby	C	6-4	283	So.	Louisville
71	Jack Gruenschlaeger	OT	6-11	354	Fr.	Fort Thomas
90	Justin Henderson	LB	6-3	242	So.	Bamberg, SC
37	Christian Hudnell	CB	6-0	181	Jr.	Cameron Park, CA
91	Farrington Huguenin	DE	6-4	263	Fr.	Columbia, SC
64	Lionel Inanzala	DT	6-3	273	So.	Louisville
47	Jabari Johnson	LB	6-1	255	Fr.	Stone Mountain, GA
51	Tristian Johnson	DT	6-1	272	Jr.	LaGrange, GA
37	Cody Jones	FB	5-11	209	Jr.	Williamsburg
82	Anthony Kendrick	TE	6-3	250	Jr.	Katy, TX
16	La'Rod King	WR	6-4	211	Sr.	Radcliff
13	Jared Leet	WR	6-3	192	Fr.	Powell, OH
46	Patrick Ligon	TE	6-4	258	Jr.	Germantown, TN
58	Shaquille Love	OG	6-4	296	Fr.	Harriman, TN
5	Ashely Lowery	S	6-1	209	So.	Cleveland, GA
88	Joe Mansour	K/P	6-2	191	Jr.	LaGrange, GA
59	Kelly Mason	LS	6-3	236	Fr.	Rockton, IL
85	Gene McCaskill	WR	6-0	198	Sr.	Chester, SC
54	Malcolm McDuffen	LB	6-3	216	So.	Hopkinsville
93	Craig McIntosh	K	6-0	194	Sr.	Lexington
41	Chad Merida	TB	5-10	208	Fr.	Barbourville
77	Darrian Miller	OT	6-5	299	So.	Lexington
79	Kevin Mitchell	OT	6-6	292	Jr.	Winston, GA
1	Martavius Neloms	S	6-1	188	Sr.	Memphis, TN
12	Morgan Newton	QB	6-4	240	Sr.	Carmel, IN
36	Kristofer O'Bryant	CB	5-7	174	Sr.	Fairfax, VA
41	TraVaughn Paschal	DE	6-4	246	So.	Odenton, MD
44	Tim Patterson	LB	6-4	250	Fr.	Louisville
83	Derrick Quarles	WR	5-11	183	Fr.	Russellville
49	Demarius Rancifer	LB	6-2	226	Fr.	Pensacola, FL
35	Cartier Rice	CB	5-10	187	Sr.	Duncan, SC
9	Demarco Robinson	WR	5-10	157	So.	Ellenwood, GA
89	Tyler Robinson	TE	6-3	250	Jr.	Friendsville, TN
99	Donte Rumph	DT	6-3	315	Jr.	St. Matthews, SC
17	Jacob Russell	QB	6-4	238	So.	Lawrenceburg
34	Muhammad Saifullah	WR	5-5	162	Jr.	Lexington
4	Raymond Sanders III	TB	5-8	197	Jr.	Stone Mountain, GA
80	Ronnie Shields	TE	6-5	241	So.	Stone Mountain, GA
38	Eric Simmons	CB	6-0	200	So.	Atlanta, GA
32	Miles Simpson	S	6-2	223	So.	Independence
56	Sam Simpson	C	6-4	293	Jr.	Lexington
69	Matt Smith	C	6-4	291	Sr.	Louisville
11	Maxwell Smith	QB	6-4	230	So.	Granada Hills, CA
35	William Tanner	WR	6-0	186	So.	Nashville, TN
96	Collins Ukwu	DE	6-5	258	Sr.	La Vergne, TN
67	Larry Warford	OG	6-3	333	Sr.	Richmond
39	Darrell "D.J." Warren	FB	6-0	224	So.	Alcoa, TN
75	Zach West	OL	6-4	301	Fr.	Richmond
26	CoShik Williams	TB	5-9	184	Sr.	Hiram, GA
36	Jerry Williams	CB	6-0	166	Fr.	Lexington
40	Avery Williamson	LB	6-1	245	Jr.	Milan, TN
42	Jay Willimott	P	6-1	239	Fr.	Georgetown
74	Trevino Woods	OT	6-5	289	Sr.	Athens, GA
94	Taylor Wyndham	DE	6-4	243	Sr.	Swansea, SC

INDIVIDUAL STATS

PASSING

Name	GP	Effic	Cmp	Att	Int	Pct	Yds	TD	Lng	Avg/G
M. Newton	10	93.1	83	174	7	47.7	793	8	46	79.3
M. Smith	8	103.3	84	153	4	54.9	819	4	55	102.4

RECEIVING

Name	GP	No.	Yds	Avg	TD	Lg	Avg/G
L. King	12	40	598	14.9	7	55	49.8
M. Roark	12	36	349	9.7	1	46	29.1
C. Williams	9	19	70	3.7	0	16	7.8

RUSHING

Name	GP	Att	Gain	Loss	Net	Avg	TD	Lg	Avg/G
C. Williams	9	118	514	28	486	4.1	3	37	54.0
J. Clemons	6	65	293	14	279	4.3	2	87	46.5
M. Newton	10	78	411	139	272	3.5	2	58	27.2

DEF. LEADERS

Tackles: D. Trevathan 143, W. Guy 120, M. Neloms 71
Tackles for loss: W. Guy 14, D. Trevathan 11.5, C. Ukwu 6.5
Sacks: D. Trevathan 3, C. Ukwu 2.5, A. Dupree 2.5
Interceptions: D. Trevathan 4, R. Burden 3, two tied with 2

NOTEBOOK

Quick feet and the ability to make quick shifts made **Marcus Caffey** one of the nation's top running backs out of high school. Those two things also are part of the reason why Kentucky opted to move the sophomore to cornerback for next season.

Caffey fell down the long UK depth chart as a runner, so when coach **Joker Phillips** approached the 5-11, 189-pound athlete out of Georgia about a position switch, he embraced the opportunity.

"The NFL always needs defensive backs, and Coach reminded me we can put more (defensive backs) on the field than running backs," Caffey said.

With the graduation of two senior cornerbacks, Caffey rose to the top of the depth chart at a position he still has yet to play in a game, but coaches seem convinced he could be an elite-level corner in a conference loaded with them.

"He's big, strong, got really good feet," Phillips said of the redshirt freshman. "He's that corner that we see every week on the other side of the ball from us."

• Caffey isn't the only high-profile position switch for the Wildcats. UK also moved redshirt freshman **Bookie Cobbins** from quarterback to wide receiver in hopes of getting more potential playmakers on the field. Cobbins sat out the spring, though, to focus on academics.

• Kentucky lost high-profile wide receivers coach Tee Martin to Southern California, replacing him with veteran SEC coach **Pat Washington**. UK also got a new defensive backs coach in **Mike Cassity**, a former standout for the Wildcats.

"They're two loud guys," Phillips said. "They're chasing their guys down the field. They're demanding on the kids. I'm excited about having them."

Cassity, who has long-time ties to several other UK assistants, said staff chemistry is important.

"We have guys who want to be here," he said. "I've been on staffs where guys spend all their time trying to find the next job. We have a lot of coaches who have worked hard to be a part of this program and know how important it is to them personally."

OPPOSING COACHES VIEW

• **On coach Joker Phillips:** "Joker Phillips is a very good football coach and a good man. ... I think it's a very critical year. He's gotta win some games they're not supposed to win. The Tennessee win (Kentucky's first over UT since 1984) breathed a huge boost of energy into the program. I don't know if the win was a statement of where they are or how bad Tennessee was."

• **On what was one of the worst offenses in the country last season:** "Unless you've got a quarterback in this league — and this league is much like the NFL — it's very difficult to score in this league. I don't see them being a lot better on offense."

Martavius Neloms
Photo by Andy Lyons/Getty Images

All-American type players to true freshmen type players, and we have to live with that," Minter said. "It's our job as coaches to make them the best they're going to be at technique and fundamentally. And it's up to them to grow and mature as quickly as possible."

Kentucky isn't without leadership and star potential, though. Senior safety Martavius Neloms has become a true leader and is the team's leading returning tackler, with 71 last season (third on the team). Fellow safety Mikie Benton (28 tackles) led the team in pass breakups with seven.

The defensive line remains mostly intact and is dangerous with Donte Rumph and Mister Cobble on the inside. Collins Ukwu and Taylor Wyndham also are veterans at their spots on the line.

"We've got two anchors who are as good as anybody that we'll face, as good as anybody we've had here," Phillips said of Rumph and Cobble. "They should give our linebackers a chance to learn how to make plays."

Several reserve linebackers like junior Avery Williamson (49 tackles), sophomore Alvin "Bud" Dupree (21 tackles) and sophomore Malcolm McDuffen will have to play key roles. Those players started to emerge at the end of last season and played well in the spring.

"I see people coming on," said Dupree, who has bulked up, adding 30 pounds since arriving on campus.

"Leaders who weren't leaders last year; everybody making plays who weren't making plays. More people are getting serious about it than they were last year. ... I see more people getting serious because of the talent that we lost. Everybody needs to step up and fill the void."

On the corners, UK needs big things from senior Cartier Rice and redshirt freshman Marcus Caffey, a converted running back.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Not a single touchdown came from UK's return unit last season.

Kentucky finished at the bottom of the conference, averaging a meager 1.8 yards per punt return — that was four yards fewer than the next-worst team in the league. The Cats' 19 punt returns in SEC play went for a combined 35 yards.

That has to change this season, Phil-

BEST & BRIGHTEST

MOST VALUABLE PLAYER

QB Maxwell Smith

Especially early in the season, when Kentucky must pick up wins, the 6-4 quarterback will have to be the one to lead the still-evolving offense. ... As a freshman last season, Smith came in for injured starter Morgan Newton and led Kentucky to a come-from-behind victory. ... Coaches like his field presence and his accuracy. He threw for a touchdown in each of his three starts. ... Smith finished last season with 819 yards and four TDs.

EMERGING STAR

LB Alvin "Bud" Dupree

Kentucky has had a collection of top linebackers, most recently Danny Trevathan, who led the SEC in tackles for the past two seasons. The next great linebacker will be Dupree, his coaches say. ... The 6-4, 245-pounder has added 30 pounds since arriving on campus last season. ... As a true freshman, started the final three games. He made 21 tackles, 14 of which came in those final three games. ... Dupree also had 2.5 sacks, two pass breakups and a fumble recovery.

TOP NEWCOMER

QB Patrick Towles

The future of Kentucky football is Towles, a 6-5, 232-pounder who is the grandson of Hall of Fame pitcher Jim Bunning. ... Towles led in-state power Highlands to a 38-1 record as a starter and three straight titles. He passed for 7,429 yards and 73 TDs and ran for 1,718 yards and 38 scores in his career. Threw for 42 scores with just one interception as a senior. ... "He's the guy that's the type of leader that we need to be the face of this program," coach Joker Phillips said.

2009 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	26.1	69
Rushing	191.2	21
Passing	140.3	114
Total	331.5	93
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	22.7	43
Rushing	182.9	100
Passing	176.8	17
Total	359.7	53
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 2	+ 0.15	51

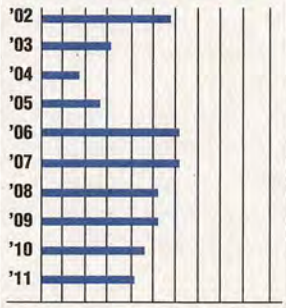
2010 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	31.2	34
Rushing	158.5	53
Passing	269.3	23
Total	427.9	27
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	28.4	72
Rushing	177.1	85
Passing	177.1	14
Total	354.2	45
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
- 4	- 0.31	75

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	15.8	117
Rushing	124.2	90
Passing	135.6	114
Total	259.8	118
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	24.7	53
Rushing	183.2	87
Passing	193.8	21
Total	377.0	58
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 1	+ 0.08	49

10-YEAR WINNING TREND



5-7, 2-6

W	at Western Kentucky	14-3
W	CENTRAL MICHIGAN	27-13
L	LOUISVILLE	17-24
L	FLORIDA	10-48
L	at LSU	7-35
L	at South Carolina	3-54
W	JACKSONVILLE STATE	38-14
L	MISSISSIPPI STATE	16-28
W	OLE MISS	30-13
L	at Vanderbilt	8-38
L	at Georgia	10-19
W	TENNESSEE	10-7

PLAYER PROFILE

Demarco Robinson
Photo by Mark Zerof-US PRESSWIRE

Robinson Ready to Return to Old Form

Sometimes the light comes on with the quick flick of a switch.

Sometimes it takes a long time for the light to shine.

Demarco Robinson took a full season to warm up, but Kentucky's coaches are saying the sophomore wide receiver will be worth the wait come fall.

Robinson, who set a Georgia state record for receiving with his 1,655 yards as a senior, managed to rack up just 20 total yards of offense last season for the Wildcats.

"He had the big eyes, like all freshmen get at times," coach Joker Phillips said. "He just never put everything together."

This season, Robinson could open eyes around the SEC, not just as a go-to wide receiver, but also as a kick returner.

"His acceleration is ridiculous," sophomore quarterback Maxwell Smith said of his favorite target in UK's Blue-White spring game. "You get the ball in his hands and he can take off and just lose the guy in no time. Demarco has really good feet; he's like a ballet dancer."

Robinson caught passes of 69 and 21 yards from Smith en route to a team-best nine catches for 146 yards in the spring game.

In the scrimmage the week before, he had two other touchdown catches that drew rave reviews from Cats coaches.

"There's something to be said for a guy that, every time you have a scrimmage, he makes a play," Phillips said. "Demarco Robinson is that guy. Every time we came into (Commonwealth Stadium), he made a huge play for us."

It's been a slower process than Robinson and his coaches might have liked, but he's started getting comfortable with the offense, which has turned him into a legitimate playmaker like he was at Martin Luther King High School in Georgia, where he caught 27 touchdown passes and returned two kicks for scores as a senior.

Robinson sometimes wondered if he'd be able to get back to that high school form. He breathed a sigh of relief after one of UK's scrimmages this spring.

"It felt real good," he said. "That's really what I've been waiting for, just to catch that feel, the old feeling. It felt good. ... It amps your confidence up."

It won't take nearly as long for him to warm up come fall, Robinson predicted.

"I'm finally getting the hang of the game," he said. "It's my second year; I'm just feeling better about the whole situation."

lips said. He thinks it will thanks to sophomore Demarco Robinson, a receiver from Ellenwood, Ga.

"He has the ability and we have to start feeding him confidence and him understanding our blocking schemes," Phillips said.

The spring failed to yield a punter, which UK desperately needs after the graduation of long-time starter Ryan Tydlacka. Those duties likely will fall on true freshman Landon Foster.

Craig McIntosh is the one consistent part of the special teams unit. The senior has extended his range to 50-plus yards. He made 12 of 14 field-goal attempts last season and 20 of 21 extra-point tries.

SCHEDULE ANALYSIS

Kentucky saw its five-year bowl streak snapped last season, and the Cats will need all of the non-conference wins they can get if they want to get back on the bowl track.

But UK starts its season at Louisville, which is experiencing a resurgence under coach Charlie Strong. That rivalry game out of the gate could mean a steep learning curve.

Wins in the SEC likely will be as difficult to come by as they always are. Some of the league's best will come to Lexington, including East beasts South Carolina and Georgia. The Cats also have to contend with games in Gainesville and Knoxville.

— Jennifer Smith

SCHEDULE

Date	Opponent	'11 Record
Sept. 2	at Louisville	7-6
Sept. 8	KENT STATE	5-7
Sept. 15	WESTERN KENTUCKY	7-5
Sept. 22	at Florida	7-6
Sept. 29	SOUTH CAROLINA	11-2
Oct. 6	MISSISSIPPI STATE	7-6
Oct. 13	at Arkansas	11-2
Oct. 20	GEORGIA	10-4
Oct. 27	at Missouri	8-5
Nov. 3	VANDERBILT	6-7
Nov. 17	SAMFORD	6-5
Nov. 24	at Tennessee	5-7

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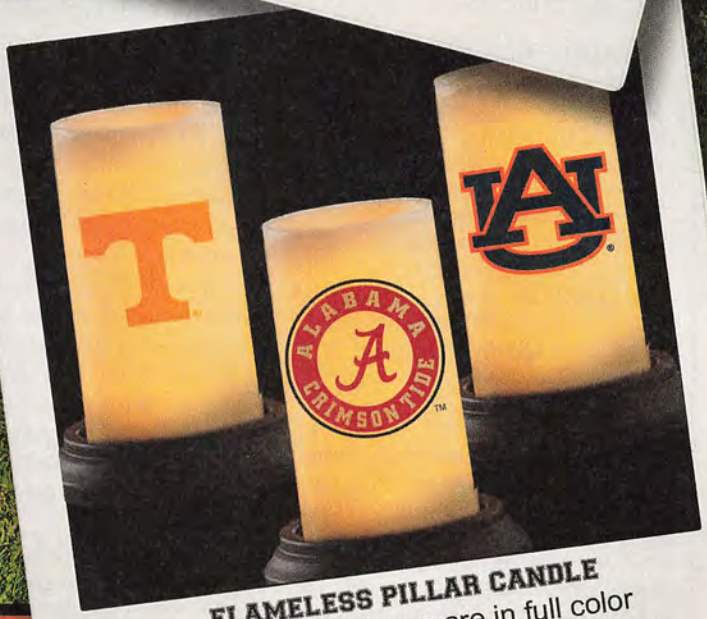

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LSU TIGERS

For more coverage of the Tigers, visit lsu.rivals.com

OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Greg Studrawa **DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: John Chavis** **STADIUM: Tiger Stadium: 92,400**

AT A GLANCE

2011:
13-1 overall, 8-0 SEC (1st, West)

COACH:
Les Miles — At LSU: 75-18, 7 years; overall: 103-39, 11 years

RETURNING STARTERS:
13; 6 offense, 5 defense, punter, kicker

PLAYERS TO WATCH:
QB Zach Mettenberger, RB Spencer Ware, WR Odell Beckham Jr., DE Sam Montgomery, LB Kevin Minter, CB Tyrann Mathieu, SS Eric Reid, P Brad Wing

PRIMARY STRENGTHS:
Speed, depth and athletic ability is found throughout the lineup. Mettenberger bolsters the quarterback spot and has a bevy of running backs to complement the passing game. The defense is stout from its hard-charging ends to its cornerbacks and at almost all points in between. Game-changing big plays are the order of the day.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS:
The lack of an experienced, proven receiving corps is a concern. Mettenberger has untold potential but hasn't yet put it into action. For the most part, LSU avoided injuries last year, but several defenders have histories of ailments that could derail the Tigers' plans. Only one starting linebacker returns.

KEY LOSSES:
QB Jordan Jefferson, WR Rueben Randle, LB Ryan Baker, CB Morris Claiborne, DT Michael Brockers

OVERVIEW:
Everything but the final outcome went extraordinarily well in 2011. That's why expectations are through the roof. Reaching them is never easy, but if any team can do it, the Tigers should be able to. They can score at a moment's notice and stop the opposition with a multitude of talented defenders. LSU should be highly entertaining en route to the top.

Tigers Seeking National Title Game Redemption

In a memorable season of firsts, LSU finished on top of nearly everything except what mattered most in 2011. When it came time to decide the BCS national champion, Alabama wrested the crown from LSU in a 21-0 rout that cast a pall over all the Tigers had accomplished.

Not only did Alabama atone for a 9-6 overtime loss to LSU during the regular season, but its defense twice humbled the Tigers, which had scored at least 35 points in 11 other games.

So what is LSU to do for an encore?

For starters, it's right to No. 1 in *Lindy's* preseason Top 25. With good reason, too, given that LSU returns 13 starters, including *Lindy's* preseason Defensive Player of the Year, superb lines on both sides of the ball and an All-American punter.

LSU has a new starting quarterback in junior Zach Mettenberger, which might be the best news of all. He gives the Tigers the strong-armed, pocket presence the offense has lacked.

What remains constant is coach Les Miles' penchant for a tenacious ground game. The Tigers feature a cadre of running backs that should be the envy of most any team.

For all its acclaim, LSU has a chip on its shoulder and something to prove after having defeated eight Top 25 teams last season. LSU edged Alabama for the SEC West title and Georgia for the overall championship, and yet when the Tigers lost for the only time in 14 games, it cost them dearly.

The heartbreak burns deeply.

"Anytime you end a season when you didn't finish the last game the way you liked, frankly you look forward to getting that feeling behind you," Miles said.

As senior offensive guard Josh Dworaczyk put it, last season was "like getting five numbers of the Powerball, but not getting the Powerball. You still had a great season, but you just didn't get the last one."

LSU is ready to try its luck again. With a dominant defense spearheaded by All-America junior cornerback Tyrann Mathieu, odds are the Tigers should post impressive numbers again.

It remains to be seen whether they're the right ones to secure the national championship that slipped from LSU's grasp last season. In any event, the Tigers are primed to show that this season they deserve a fantastic finish.

OFFENSE

Zach Mettenberger and the skilled big-play performers surrounding him will generate most of the headlines, but it's what LSU has up front and center that makes everything go.

Senior center P.J. Lonergan is a three-year starter and one of four returning starters on the line. Add in the return of guard Josh Dworaczyk, who missed last season with a knee injury, and the Tigers are ready to bulldoze opponents.

The line, including All-SEC first-team tackle Alex Hurst, has never had the luxury of protecting a pocket passer such as Mettenberger. The quarterback has demonstrated a quick release and field presence and should flourish given time to operate.

If LSU lacks anything, it's an experienced, proven wide receiver. Senior Russell Shepard can score from anywhere on the field, and his four touchdowns are the most of any returning receiver. With 14 catches, he's the second-lead-

Tyrann Mathieu
Photo by RD Moore

ing returning receiver. He also rushed for 52 yards. Consistency is his missing ingredient.

Sophomore Odell Beckham Jr. enjoyed a fruitful first season and seems primed to become the Tigers' go-to receiver. He's LSU's top returning pass catcher with 41 receptions for 475 yards and two touchdowns. What's more, he likes the early connection he's made with Mettenberger.

"With Zach's arm strength, he knows what he can do, and he knows that he can make those deep throws," Beckham said. "We have a certain type of chemistry and connection."

For all the advances in the passing game, a punishing ground attack has long been Miles' bread and butter. He has the workhorses to pull it off, too, with the top four rushers back and a worthy fifth in newcomer Jeremy Hill.

Junior Michael Ford tops the list with 127 carries for 756 yards and seven touchdowns. Ford should recover from the knee injury that caused him to miss much of spring practice. Junior Spencer Ware, the Tigers' starting tailback, matched sophomore Kenny Hilliard in scoring eight touchdowns, while rushing 177 times for 707 yards.

Junior Alfred Blue averaged a team-best 6.9 yards per carry on 78 attempts. Hilliard hasn't reached the status of his more-famous uncle, Dalton, but he does give the Tigers an added physical dimension, as does Hill. Hilliard carried 62 times for 336 yards.

"I think we have proven that we can throw the football, and we can run the football," Miles said.

The Tigers certainly are looking to rebound after failing to score in the BCS Championship Game and trailing at halftime in the SEC Championship Game, 10-7, before routing Georgia, 42-10.

With Mettenberger and his cohorts primed for action, it's reasonable to assume the Tigers will make last year's late-season hiccup a distant memory.

DEFENSE

There is no shortage of superb talent, from speedy ends Sam Montgomery and Barkevious Mingo to a secondary that features All-America junior cornerback Tyrann Mathieu. Senior Josh Downs will join veteran Bennie Logan at tackle.

As a new starter and the only non-junior on the first unit, Downs should find his job made easier by the presence of the M&M duo on the corners of the line. In earning second-team All-America honors last season, Montgomery registered a team-high nine sacks among his 49 stops. Logan was the leading tackler among linemen with 57.

"Our front seven is going to be very

Sam Montgomery
Photo by Marvin Gentry

SCOUTING REPORT: Offense

POS	STARTER	YR.	COMMENT	BACKUP/KEY DEPTH
QB	Zach Mettenberger	Jr.	Finally gets a chance to prove his worth.	Stephen Rivers, Fr.
RB	Spencer Ware*	Jr.	Tied for team lead in touchdowns with eight.	Alfred Blue, Jr.
FB	J.C. Copeland	Jr.	Former DL valuable because of punishing blocks.	Jeremy Hill, Fr.
WR	Odell Beckham, Jr.*	So.	TD catches of more than 50 yards in back-to-back games.	Russell Shepard, Sr.
WR	Jarvis Landry	So.	Already has made his mark on special teams.	James Wright, Jr.
TE	Chase Clement	Sr.	Made both first career start and touchdown catch in 2011.	Tyler Edwards, Sr.
LT	Chris Faulk*	Jr.	Workhorse who played every offensive snap in four games.	Chris Davenport, Jr.
LG	La'el Collins	So.	Tigers set with either player; nice depth to have.	Josh Dworaczyk, Sr.
C	P.J. Lonergan*	Sr.	Three-year starter; played a team-high 863 snaps in 2010.	Elliott Porter, So.
RG	Josh Williford*	Jr.	Came on strong after missing first two games with injury.	Matt Branch, Sr.
RT	Alex Hurst*	Sr.	Coaches chose him to their All-SEC first team.	Chris Davenport, Jr.
K	Drew Alleman*	Sr.	Made 16 of 18 FG attempts and 62 of 63 extra-point tries.	James Hairston, So.

*Returning Starter

SCOUTING REPORT: Defense

POS	STARTER	YR.	COMMENT	BACKUP/KEY DEPTH
DE	Sam Montgomery*	Jr.	Led team in sacks (nine), second in TFLs (13.5).	Lavar Edwards, Sr.
DT	Josh Downs	Sr.	Made first start last season against Mississippi State.	Anthony Johnson, So.
DT	Bennie Logan*	Jr.	Sophomore highlights include blocked FG vs. Alabama.	Ego Ferguson, So.
DE	Barkevious Mingo	Jr.	Career-high five QB hurries in SEC title game.	Jermauria Rasco, So.
LB	Tahj Jones	Jr.	Recorded his first career pick and sack in 2011.	Lamar Louis, Fr.
LB	Kevin Minter*	Jr.	Scored on a fumble recovery against Ole Miss.	Ronnie Feist, Fr.
LB	Lamin Barrow	Jr.	Twice tied his career best with six tackles.	Luke Muncie, Jr.
CB	Tyrann Mathieu*	Jr.	"Honey Badger for Heisman" is the battle cry.	David Jenkins, Fr.
CB	Tharold Simon	Jr.	Broke up a team-best 10 passes; added two picks.	Jalen Collins, Fr.
SS	Craig Loston	Jr.	Forced a fumble that set up a TD against Oregon.	Micah Eugene, Fr.
FS	Eric Reid*	Jr.	His INT saved regular-season win over Alabama.	Ronald Martin, So.
P	Brad Wing*	So.	Australian has excelled in his adopted sport.	Drew Alleman, Sr.

*Returning Starter

TIGERS RECRUITING 2012

rivals.com

3 NEWCOMERS OF IMPACT

Dwayne Thomas
A Rivals250 recruit with a ton of potential, Thomas has excellent height and length and is an extremely athletic player at the cornerback position. His 6-1 frame could help neutralize opposing SEC receivers, who seem to be getting taller and more physical each season. He was ranked as one of the top 15 players nationally at his position.

Vadal Alexander
While he has offensive tackle height, his body says offensive guard. He's a player who possesses a very good first step, and he displays excellent strength and feet positioning to dictate play consistently. To be ready for the SEC, Alexander will need to work on his body some, but there is little doubt he is someone with great potential.

Avery Johnson
The younger brother of former Tigers star Patrick Peterson, Johnson is a four-star receiver from the Sunshine State. He is incredibly athletic with very good measurables at 6-2 and 180 pounds, and is a threat either over the middle or vertically in the passing game. At times, he can make things look a bit easy.

THE SLEEPER

Jeremy Liggins
Liggins, whom the Tigers grabbed from archrival Ole Miss' backyard, has the physical tools to succeed in college, but he must keep his weight down for that to happen. If for some reason it doesn't work out for the big-bodied Liggins at QB, he is talented enough to transition to either defensive end or tight end.

Committments	22
Average Stars	3.36
★★★★★	0
★★★★☆	9
★★★☆☆	12
★★☆☆☆	1
Total Stars	74
National Rank: 18	SEC: 7

2013 NEEDS: A few positions stand out. One of them would be tight end. There, LSU has two seniors on scholarship, so the goal would be to land a couple in this cycle to replace the ones on the way out. The good news for LSU is that the state of Louisiana has some excellent players at that spot. Defensive tackle is another area of need; of the top four in the rotation, one is a senior and another is a junior. Also, look for LSU to sign at least one quarterback.

by Keith Niebuhr/rivals.com

Name	Pos	Ht	Wt	Stars	Hometown	School
Kwon Alexander	LB	6-2	212	★★★★	Oxford, AL	Oxford
Rated as the No. 11 prospect in Alabama by Rivals.com...Rated as the nation's No. 20 outside linebacker... Participated in the Under Armour All-American Game.						
Vadal Alexander	OL	6-6	310	★★★★	Buford, GA	Buford
Rivals250 selection...Rated as the No. 17 prospect in Georgia...Rated as the nation's No. 11 offensive guard... Participated in the Under Armour All-American Game... Enrolled at LSU in January.						
Travin Dural	WR	6-2	170	★★★★	Beaux Bridge, LA	Breaux Bridge
Rated as the No. 8 prospect in Louisiana by Rivals.com...Rated as the nation's No. 49 wide receiver...Chose LSU over Alabama.						
Derek Edinburgh	OL	6-8	320	★★★★	New Orleans, LA	Edna Karr
Rated as the No. 10 prospect in Louisiana by Rivals.com...Rated as the nation's No. 29 offensive tackle...Chose LSU over Mississippi State and Colorado.						
Ronnie Feist	LB	6-2	214	★★★	Edgard, LA	West St. John
Rated as the No. 18 prospect in Louisiana by Rivals.com...Rated as the nation's No. 34 outside linebacker... Participated in the Under Armour All-American Game...Enrolled at LSU in January.						
Reid Ferguson	OL	6-2	235	★★	Buford, GA	Buford
Coming to LSU as a long snapper...Chose the Tigers over San Diego State... Participated in the Under Armour All-American Game...Enrolled at LSU in January.						
Dillon Gordon	TE	6-5	245	★★★	River Ridge, LA	John Curtis
Rated as the No. 22 prospect in Louisiana by Rivals.com...Rated as the nation's No. 23 tight end...Also plays center on the basketball team.						
Trey Granier	LB	6-1	225	★★★	Thibodaux, LA	Thibodaux
Rated as the No. 19 prospect in Louisiana by Rivals.com...Rated as the nation's No. 38 outside linebacker.						
Jerald Hawkins	OL	6-7	285	★★★	Baldwin, LA	West St Mary School
Rated as the No. 15 prospect in Louisiana by Rivals.com...Rated as the nation's No. 42 offensive tackle...Chose LSU over Arizona State and Pittsburgh.						
Kavahra Holmes	WR	6-1	180	★★★	Breaux Bridge, LA	Breaux Bridge
Rated as the No. 36 prospect in Louisiana by Rivals.com...Chose LSU over TCU.						
Danielle Hunter	DE	6-5	235	★★★★	Katy, TX	Morton Ranch
Rated as the No. 37 prospect in Texas by Rivals.com...Rated as the nation's No. 21 weakside defensive end...Chose LSU over Oklahoma and Missouri.						

Name	Pos	Ht	Wt	Stars	Hometown	School
Avery Johnson	WR	6-2	180	★★★★	Pompano Beach, FL	Blanche Ely
Rivals250 selection...Rated as the No. 39 prospect in Florida...Rated as the nation's No. 42 wide receiver... Participated in the Under Armour All-American Game.						
Deion Jones	LB	6-2	200	★★★	New Orleans, LA	Jesuit
Rated as the No. 13 prospect in Louisiana by Rivals.com...Rated as the nation's No. 31 outside linebacker...Switched commitment from Nebraska...Had 179 tackles and eight sacks as a senior.						
Jeremy Liggins	QB	6-3	270	★★★	Oxford, MS	Lafayette
Rated as the No. 7 prospect in Mississippi by Rivals.com...Rated as the nation's No. 16 dual-threat quarterback...Participated in the Alabama-Mississippi All-Star Classic...Chose LSU over Alabama and Ole Miss.						
Lamar Louis	ATH	6-0	220	★★★★	Breaux Bridge, LA	Breaux Bridge
Rivals250 selection...Rated as the No. 7 prospect in Louisiana...Rated as the nation's No. 18 athlete... Participated in the Offense-Defense All-American Bowl...Enrolled at LSU in January.						
Jalen Mills	DB	6-0	180	★★★	DeSoto, TX	DeSoto
Rated as the No. 80 prospect in Texas by Rivals.com...Rated as the nation's No. 48 cornerback...Chose LSU over Virginia and Pittsburgh.						
Lorenzo Phillips	LB	6-1	200	★★★★	Patterson, LA	Patterson
Rated as the No. 12 prospect in Louisiana by Rivals.com...Rated as the nation's No. 29 outside linebacker.						
Derrick Raymond	DB	6-2	175	★★★	Metairie, LA	East Jefferson
Rated as the No. 37 prospect in Louisiana by Rivals.com...Had 39 tackles, 15 pass breakups, three interceptions and two sacks as a senior.						
Jerquinick Sandolph	DB	6-1	180	★★★	Boutte, LA	Hahnville
Rated as the No. 34 prospect in Louisiana by Rivals.com...Chose LSU over offers from Memphis, Pittsburgh and others.						
Dwayne Thomas	DB	6-1	170	★★★★	New Orleans, LA	O. Perry Walker
Rivals250 selection...Rated as the No. 5 prospect in Louisiana...Rated as the nation's No. 14 cornerback...Participated in the Offense-Defense All-American Bowl.						
Corey Thompson	DB	6-2	205	★★★	Missouri City, TX	Elkins
Rated as the No. 40 prospect in Texas by Rivals.com...Rated as the nation's No. 18 safety...Chose LSU over Texas A&M, Arkansas, Nebraska and Oklahoma State.						

TIGERS SPRING ROSTER

No.	Name	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.	Hometown
87	Chancey Aghayere	DE	6-4	279	Sr.	Garland, TX
27	Dexter Alexander	DB	5-9	188	Jr.	Baton Rouge
	Kwon Alexander	LB	6-2	220	Fr.	Oxford, AL
78	Vadal Alexander	OG	6-6	315	Fr.	Buford, GA
30	Drew Alleman	PK/P	5-11	183	Sr.	Lafayette
98	Jordan Allen	DE	6-6	252	So.	West Monroe
71	Jonah Austin	OL	6-6	322	Fr.	New Orleans
57	Lamin Barrow	LB	6-2	229	Jr.	Marrero
3	Odell Beckham, Jr.	WR	5-11	183	So.	New Orleans
4	Alfred Blue	RB	6-2	215	Jr.	Boutte
86	Kadron Boone	WR	6-0	195	Jr.	Ocala, FL
51	Logan Boudreaux	SNP	6-1	210	Fr.	St. Amant
79	Matt Branch	OG	6-6	287	Sr.	Monroe
66	Ailen Buniger	OL	6-3	275	So.	New Orleans
28	Shawn Burst	FB	5-11	219	Fr.	Mandeville
88	Chase Clement	TE	6-5	251	Sr.	Thibodaux
32	Jalen Collins	DB	6-1	184	Fr.	Olive Branch, MS
70	La'el Collins	OG	6-5	320	So.	Baton Rouge
44	J.C. Copeland	FB	6-1	280	Jr.	LaGrange, GA
73	Chris Davenport	OT	6-4	320	Jr.	Mansfield
36	Cleveland Davis	RB	6-0	289	Jr.	Baton Rouge
41	Travis Dickson	TE	6-3	230	So.	Ocean Springs, MS
61	Ben Domingue	C	6-3	272	Jr.	Lafayette
77	Josh Downs	DT	6-1	287	Sr.	Bastrop
40	Rockey Duplessis	S	6-1	209	Jr.	Belle Chasse
	Travin Dural	WR	6-2	170	Fr.	Breaux Bridge
68	Josh Dworaczyk	OG	6-6	301	Sr.	New Iberia
	Derek Edinburgh, Jr.	OL	6-8	325	Fr.	New Orleans
89	Lavar Edwards	DE	6-5	264	Sr.	Gretna
47	Tyler Edwards	TE	6-4	235	Sr.	Monroe
34	Micah Eugene	DB	5-11	194	Fr.	Lafayette
	Fehoko Fanaika	OL	6-6	340	Jr.	Sacramento, CA
76	Chris Faulk	OT	6-6	325	Jr.	Slidell
22	Ronnie Feist	LB	6-2	225	Fr.	Edgard
9	Ego Ferguson	DT	6-3	283	So.	Frederick, MD
50	Reid Ferguson	SNP	6-2	235	Fr.	Buford, GA
5	Jarrett Fobbs	WR	5-11	195	So.	Shreveport
42	Michael Ford	RB	5-10	215	Jr.	Leesville
48	Seth Fruge	LB	5-11	200	Jr.	Welsh
29	Sam Gibson	S	6-1	203	So.	Prattville, AL
	Dillon Gordon	TE	6-4	265	Fr.	River Ridge
	Trey Granier	LB	6-0	225	Fr.	Thibodaux
30	James Hairston	PK/P	6-0	200	So.	Dallas, TX
55	Jarrett Hardnett	LB	6-1	235	Jr.	Baton Rouge
	Jerald Hawkins	OL	6-6	290	Fr.	Baldwin
19	Codie Henriques	S	5-9	180	So.	St. Francisville
33	Jeremy Hill	RB	6-2	225	Fr.	Baton Rouge
27	Kenny Hilliard	RB	5-11	240	So.	Patterson
	Kavahra Holmes	WR	6-1	180	Fr.	Breaux Bridge
	Danielle Hunter	DE	6-5	235	Fr.	Katy, TX
72	Alex Hurst	OT	6-6	340	Sr.	Bartlett, TN
84	Nic Jacobs	TE	6-5	253	So.	Many
25	David Jenkins	DB	6-1	193	Fr.	Jena
39	Josh Johns	LB	6-2	206	Jr.	Baton Rouge
90	Anthony Johnson	DT	6-3	310	So.	New Orleans
	Avery Johnson	WR	6-2	180	Fr.	Pompano Beach, FL
62	Edwin Johnson	LB	6-1	210	Sr.	Baton Rouge
45	Jordan Johnson	WR	5-10	175	Jr.	Friendswood, TX
96	Mickey Johnson	DL	6-1	312	Fr.	Covington
77	A'Trey-U Jones	OL	5-11	274	Jr.	Tickfaw
	Deion Jones	LB	6-2	200	Fr.	New Orleans
58	Tahj Jones	LB	6-2	205	Jr.	Sulphur
63	Branch Kampe	LB	5-11	200	Fr.	Rochester, MI
	Jamie Keehn	P	6-4	220	Fr.	Miners Rest, Australia
13	Chris LaBorde	WR	6-1	185	Fr.	Lafayette
80	Jarvis Landry	WR	6-0	190	So.	Lutcher
89	Jeffrey Lang	DB	5-10	186	So.	Benton
52	Gabe Langlois	OL	6-2	312	Fr.	Prairieville
35	Tommy LeBeau	S	6-1	190	Fr.	Monroe
53	Grant Leger	LB	6-1	215	Fr.	Metairie
	Jeremy Liggins	QB	6-3	270	Fr.	Oxford, MS
93	Bennie Logan	DT	6-3	287	Jr.	Coushatta
64	P.J. Lonergan	C	6-4	305	Sr.	New Orleans
6	Craig Loston	S	6-2	208	Jr.	Houston, TX
23	Lamar Louis	LB	6-0	220	Fr.	Breaux Bridge
54	Justin Maclin	DE	6-4	241	So.	Memphis, TN
14	Terrence Magee	RB	5-9	212	So.	Franklinton
26	Ronald Martin	DB	6-1	199	So.	White Castle
7	Tyrann Mathieu	CB	5-9	175	Jr.	New Orleans
8	Zach Mettenberger	QB	6-5	222	Jr.	Watkinsville, GA
60	Devante Meullion	FB	5-10	240	Fr.	Seattle, WA
	Jalen Mills	CB	6-0	180	Fr.	DeSoto, TX
37	Michael Minaldi	WR	6-2	200	Fr.	Lake Charles
49	Barkevious Mingo	DE	6-5	240	Jr.	West Monroe
46	Kevin Minter	LB	6-2	242	Jr.	Suwanee, GA
48	Charles Mitchell	RB	6-1	200	So.	Sugar Land, TX
99	Sam Montgomery	DE	6-4	245	Jr.	Greenwood, SC
52	Luke Muncie	LB	6-3	220	Jr.	Klein, TX
43	Connor Neighbors	FB	5-10	233	So.	Huntsville, AL
17	Myles O'Brien	LB	6-2	210	So.	Metairie
47	Jeremy Peeples	DL	6-4	240	So.	Selma, AL
52	Michael Petty	S	5-10	185	Fr.	Alexandria
	Lorenzo Phillips	LB	6-2	200	Fr.	Patterson
55	Elliott Porter	OL	6-4	278	So.	Waggaman
15	Jerrard Randall	QB	6-1	180	Fr.	Hollywood, FL
59	Jermauria Rasco	DE	6-3	255	So.	Shreveport
	Derrick Raymond	CB	6-0	175	Fr.	Metairie
1	Eric Reid	S	6-2	208	Jr.	Geismar
10	Nick Rice	LB	6-1	229	Jr.	Coppell, TX
17	Stephen Rivers	QB	6-7	212	Fr.	Athens, AL
	Jerqwinick Sandolph	S	6-2	180	Fr.	Boutte
10	Russell Shepard	WR	6-1	185	Sr.	Houston, TX
24	Tharold Simon	CB	6-3	187	Jr.	Eunice
39	Jason Slaydon	FB	5-10	215	Jr.	Westlake
41	Robert Smith	WR	6-0	192	So.	Friendswood, TX
29	Tre' Sullivan	DB	5-8	186	So.	Donaldsonville
	Dwayne Thomas	CB	6-0	170	Fr.	New Orleans
95	Quentin Thomas	DL	6-3	279	Fr.	Breaux Bridge
	Corey Thompson	DB	6-2	205	Fr.	Missouri City, TX
21	Paul Turner	WR	5-11	186	Fr.	West Monroe
56	Trai Turner	OL	6-2	332	Fr.	New Orleans
28	Ronnie Vinson	DB	5-11	185	So.	New Orleans
11	Spencer Ware	RB	5-11	223	Jr.	Cincinnati, OH
75	Evan Washington	OT	6-5	326	So.	DeSoto, TX
31	D.J. Welter	LB	6-0	226	So.	Crowley
67	Corey White	OL	6-3	328	Fr.	Baton Rouge
81	Armand Williams	WR	6-3	200	So.	Slidell
40	Tabari Williams	RB	5-7	167	Jr.	Hiram, GA
74	Josh Williford	OG	6-7	324	Jr.	Dothan, AL
38	Brad Wing	P	6-3	184	So.	Melbourne, Australia
82	James Wright	WR	6-2	201	Jr.	Belle Chasse

INDIVIDUAL STATS

PASSING

	GP	Effic	Cmp	Att	Int	Pct	Yards	TD	Long	Avg/G
J. Lee	13	152.0	104	167	3	62.3	1306	14	57	100.5
J. Jefferson	10	138.7	61	100	2	61.0	737	6	59	73.7

RECEIVING

	GP	No.	Yards	Avg	TD	Long	Avg/G
R. Randle	14	53	917	17.3	8	59	65.5
O. Beckham, Jr.	14	41	475	11.6	2	52	33.9
D. Peterson	14	18	179	9.9	1	29	12.8

RUSHING

	GP	Att	Gain	Loss	Net	Avg	TD	Long	Avg/G
M. Ford	14	127	772	16	756	6.0	7	49	54.0
S. Ware	13	177	727	20	707	4.0	8	35	54.4
A. Blue	13	78	543	4	539	6.9	7	57	41.5

DEF. LEADERS

Tackles: E. Reid 76, T. Mathieu 76, B. Taylor 71
Tackles for loss: B. Mingo 15, S. Montgomery 13.5, M. Brockers 10
Sacks: S. Montgomery 9, B. Mingo 8, R. Brooks 3.5
Interceptions: M. Claiborne 6, five tied with 2

NOTEBOOK

Coach **Les Miles** added two coaches with Louisiana ties to the staff during the offseason. Ex-LSU player and coach **Corey Raymond** became defensive backs coach, while former McNeese State player and coach **Adam Henry** was hired as wide receivers coach.

Raymond started in the LSU defensive backfield from 1989-91 and coached under Miles from 2006-08. He returned to LSU after a one-year stint at Nebraska. Raymond, a former NFL player, replaced **Ron Cooper**, who joined the NFL's Tampa Bay Buccaneers.

Henry, one of McNeese State's all-time leading receivers, left the Oakland Raiders to replace **Billy Gonzales**, who became Illinois' offensive coordinator.

• Miles joined cornerback Morris Claiborne, defensive tackle Michael Brockers and wide receiver Rueben Randle for the NFL Draft at New York City's Radio City Music Hall in April. Miles participated in all three days of the NFL Network's coverage of the draft.

Claiborne and Randle jumped to the NFL after their junior seasons, while Brockers left after a sophomore campaign in which he collected 54 total tackles, including 10 for loss. The highly acclaimed Claiborne won the Jim Thorpe Award as the nation's best defensive back. Randle led LSU last season with 53 catches for 917 yards and eight touchdowns.

• The NCAA granted offensive guard **Josh Dworaczyk** a sixth year of eligibility. Dworaczyk sat out last season after undergoing knee surgery to repair the ACL he tore in preseason camp. Dworaczyk redshirted during his injury-plagued freshman season in 2007. He started for two years at left guard before being sidelined last season.

• Former homecoming queen and soccer goalkeeper **Mo Isom** received a spring tryout at placekicker but was cut, in part, because Miles said he was concerned about her ability to tackle despite being listed at 6-1, 190. Isom initially indicated she might try out again.

• **Greg Shaw**, a senior offensive tackle on the 2011 team, joined four other agricultural business undergraduates on the winning team at the 2012 National Grocers Association Annual Convention in Las Vegas. The case study focused on developing a mobile coupon promotional strategy for a 10-store independent grocery operation.

OPPOSING COACHES VIEW

• **On LSU's offense:** "They may be more talented across the board and may have more offensive opportunities, so they don't just put it all on the defense. If their quarterback (Zach Mettenberger) comes through like many people think he will, watch out. He's a better quarterback than what they played with the last two years."

• **On LSU defensive ends Barkevious Mingo and Sam Montgomery:** "Mingo is like a lightning bolt coming off the edge. They are the reason LSU's offensive tackles Alex Hurst and Chris Faulk are so good. They don't see speed like that on the edge in most games, where the rushers can also put their hand on your throat and push you back 30 yards into the QB. Mingo is so long, he's like Jevon Kearse was at Florida."

Alex Hurst
Photo by RD Moore

difficult to deal with," Miles said.

Montgomery has the quickness and strength to disrupt the opposition, while Mingo put his linebacker-type speed to good use last season in recording eight sacks. Between them, Montgomery and Mingo generated 17 of the Tigers' 39 sacks.

If any spot may not be as well-stocked as the others, it's middle linebacker, where junior Kevin Minter is the only returning starter. He's a good one to have, though, given how he finished with 61 stops, including 21 solo tackles.

Lamin Barrow and Tahj Jones should stand on either side of Minter, but it helps that LSU has "some depth at linebacker with some young guys," Miles said.

Mathieu perpetuates LSU's tradition of stifling cornerbacks. This is likely the last college season for "Honey Badger," a nickname that isn't as popular with his teammates as it is nationally.

Mathieu tied junior free safety Eric Reid with a team-high 76 total tackles last season, while recovering five fumbles and forcing six. Mathieu said LSU has "a lot of young guys that are ready to see some SEC football and championship football."

They have wonderful examples of how to do just that from the likes of Mathieu and cornerback Tharold Simon, and four other returning starters. Simon actually edged Mathieu last season with team-high totals of 10 pass breakups and 12 passes defended.

Reid and Mathieu each had two interceptions last year, and Reid proved himself to be another in a long line of opportunistic defenders with two forced fumbles and two recoveries.

Oft-injured strong safety Craig Loston missed the spring game but is expected back to expand on last year's reserve role. He collected 14 tackles and a forced fumble.

LSU has a multitude of depth at each position, which allows coordinator John Chavis to rest his players and keep fresh legs in the game.

It also makes for an unrelenting attack that keeps the opposition on its heels and puts the Tigers in position to take control. On numerous occasions, LSU has relied on its defense to jump-start a sputtering offense.

SPECIAL TEAMS

About the only thing sophomore punter Brad Wing did wrong last year was excessively celebrate what would have been a touchdown off a fake punt. Instead, he was flagged for a penalty and had the points taken away. Other than that, he was tremendous in winning first-team All-America honors.

BEST & BRIGHTEST

MOST VALUABLE PLAYER

CB Tyrann Mathieu

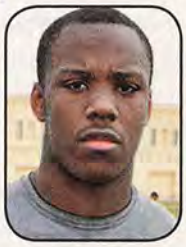
An electrifying player who in two years already owns the school record for forced fumbles with 11. ... In 25 games, he's created 14 turnovers (eight fumble recoveries, four interceptions, two forced fumbles recovered by a teammate). ... Despite measuring only 5-9, 175, he's a tenacious defender who makes good use of his athletic ability. ... A Heisman Trophy finalist and a consensus All-American last year. ... Won the Chuck Bednarik Award as the college Defensive Player of the Year.

EMERGING STAR

DT Anthony Johnson

Set the tone for his career with half a tackle for a loss on his first collegiate play. Finished with 12 tackles in 14 games, including three for losses with a sack. ... May well move into the starting lineup after failing to start last season. ... As a 6-3, 310-pounder, his unusual physical ability has earned him the nickname "Freak."... Named a Freshman All-American and to the SEC coaches All-Freshman Team. ... Set state prep record with 67.5 career sacks.

TOP NEWCOMER



RB Jeremy Hill

Might have played last year but never signed after off-field legal issues that were later reduced from a felony to a misdemeanor. ... Enrolled last January and rushed six times for 37 yards in the spring game. Joins a crowded position but has the capability of making room for himself. ... A 2010 *Parade* All-American from Baton Rouge, rushing 302 times for a school-record 2,260 yards and 36 touchdowns.

2009 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	24.9	76
Rushing	122.8	90
Passing	181.8	97
Total	304.5	112
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	16.2	11
Rushing	133.4	46
Passing	194.2	29
Total	327.6	26
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 4	+ 0.31	36

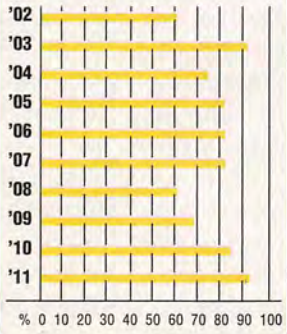
2010 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	29.7	45
Rushing	185.7	28
Passing	155.6	107
Total	341.3	86
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	18.2	11
Rushing	137.3	42
Passing	169.9	10
Total	307.2	12
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 8	+ 0.62	22

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	35.7	17
Rushing	202.6	22
Passing	152.5	106
Total	355.1	86
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	11.3	2
Rushing	90.1	5
Passing	171.4	8
Total	261.5	2
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 20	+ 1.43	2

10-YEAR WINNING TREND



RESULTS

13-1, 9-1

W	OREGON	40-27
W	NORTHWESTERN STATE	49-3
W	at Mississippi State	19-6
W	at West Virginia	47-21
W	KENTUCKY	35-7
W	FLORIDA	41-11
W	at Tennessee	38-7
W	AUBURN	45-10
W	at Alabama (OT)	9-6
W	WESTERN KENTUCKY	42-9
W	at Ole Miss	52-3
W	ARKANSAS	41-17
	SEC Championship	
W	vs. Georgia	42-10
	BCS National Championship Game	
L	vs. Alabama	0-21

PLAYER PROFILE

Zach Mettenberger
Photo by Derick E. Hingle-US PRESSWIRE

Long Time Coming: Mettenberger Gets Shot to Lead Tigers

Not only does talented junior quarterback Zach Mettenberger give LSU a strong-armed, pocket passer, he provides the Tigers with the kind of stability at the position they haven't known since Matt Flynn guided them to the 2007 BCS national championship.

There are those who feel Mettenberger can do the same after seeing limited action in five games last year. Mettenberger played behind the departed Jordan Jefferson and Jarrett Lee, who spent their careers battling one another for the No.1 spot.

The job now clearly belongs to Mettenberger, who transferred to LSU before last season from Butler (Kan.) Community college. Mettenberger had transferred there after being dismissed from Georgia without having played for the Bulldogs.

"I think we're going to win a championship with him," said All-America junior cornerback Tyrann Mathieu, who's been tested by Mettenberger's deft touch in practice.

"Given the rapport Mettenberger and the receivers have shown, I think those guys are definitely going to do something special this year."

Sophomore wide receiver Odell Beckham Jr. certainly hopes so, given how he's clicked with Mettenberger after a productive first season in which he worked his way into the starting lineup. Beckham finished with 41 catches for 475 yards and two touchdowns.

"He's doing a phenomenal job right now," Beckham said after a spring game in which Mettenberger completed 14 of 25 passes for 270 yards and two touchdowns with two interceptions. Beckham can just imagine that LSU's offense will feature "an air raid" with Mettenberger at the controls.

Coach Les Miles isn't really going to let that happen, though, considering how he wants balance that includes a bruising ground game. But Mettenberger's ability to throw accurately downfield at least gives the LSU offense a dimension it hasn't had in years.

Mettenberger attempted only 11 passes last year, completing eight for 92 yards and a touchdown. He now gets most of the reps in practice and is far ahead of redshirt freshman backup Stephen Rivers, the brother of San Diego Chargers quarterback Philip Rivers.

"I thought I had a lot of good passes (in the spring game)," Mettenberger said. "I missed a couple. That's something that I'm going to look into."

Continued sustained improvement is what Miles wants to see.

"Now we can ... move in a short game with the running game or hit the long ball with our throwing game," Miles said. "It really puts a lot of pressure on our opponents."

He averaged 44.4 yards on 59 punts, 20 of which traveled more than 50 yards. He had 14 attempts hit inside the 5-yard line.

Placekicker Drew Alleman was another first-year starter who excelled beyond expectations. He scored a team-high 110 points in making 16 of 18 field-goal attempts and 62 of 63 extra-point tries.

Tyrann Mathieu will return punts, which will help him make a Heisman case. He returned one for a 62-yard touchdown against Georgia in the SEC Championship Game. Russell Shepard will return kickoffs.

SCHEDULE ANALYSIS

Mark Nov. 3 on your calendar. That's when LSU will entertain Alabama in the latest installment in the burgeoning rivalry. It never will reach the intensity of Alabama-Auburn, but LSU has no other game that matches the annual interest.

The Tigers renew another rivalry in playing Texas A&M, the newest member of the SEC West. They will visit the Aggies on Oct. 20. LSU will go to Fayetteville, Ark. (as opposed to Little Rock) for the first time since 1992 in closing the regular season with the Razorbacks.

As difficult as the schedule may be, it's more conducive to a national championship than last year when LSU played eight Top 25 teams.

— Dave Moormann

SCHEDULE

Date	Opponent	'11 Record
Sept. 1	NORTH TEXAS	5-7
Sept. 8	WASHINGTON	7-6
Sept. 15	IDAHO	2-10
Sept. 22	at Auburn	8-5
Sept. 29	TOWSON	9-3
Oct. 6	at Florida	7-6
Oct. 13	SOUTH CAROLINA	11-2
Oct. 20	at Texas A&M	7-6
Nov. 3	ALABAMA	12-1
Nov. 10	MISSISSIPPI STATE	7-6
Nov. 17	OLE MISS	2-10
Nov. 23	at Arkansas	11-2

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OLE MISS REBELS

For more coverage of the Rebels, visit olemiss.rivals.com

OFFENSIVE COORDINATORS: Dan Werner, Matt Luke **DEFENSIVE COORDINATORS: Dave Wommack, Wesley McGriff** **STADIUM: Vaught-Hemingway Stadium: 60,580**

AT A GLANCE

2011:
2-10, 0-8 SEC (6th, West)

COACH:
Hugh Freeze — At Ole Miss: 1st year; overall: 30-7, 3 years

RETURNING STARTERS:
16; 7 offense, 7 defense, punter, kicker

PLAYERS TO WATCH:
RB Jeff Scott, WR Donte Moncrief, WR Ja-Mes Logan, OG Aaron Morris, DE C.J. Johnson, LB Mike Marry, CB Wesley Pendleton, SS Charles Sawyer

PRIMARY STRENGTHS:
Hugh Freeze inherits a young roster, but one that saw a lot of guys get experience last season. There are potential playmakers all over the offense, and the defense was recruited to play fast and cover multiple receivers.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS:
There is a reason Ole Miss has lost 15 straight in the SEC: the Rebels lack depth at pretty much every position and have an overall talent gap between themselves and the rest of the SEC. How much difference can a new coaching staff make?

KEY LOSSES:
RB Brandon Bolden, OT Bobby Massie, OT Bradley Sowell, DE Kentrell Lockett

OVERVIEW:
Freeze is known for quick turnarounds everywhere he's been, but that was high school, NAIA and the Sun Belt. This is the SEC, and progress likely will be measured slowly. Still, there's some talent on the roster. If that talent is put in the right places and plays with confidence, the Rebels could double their win total from 2011 — and end that SEC drought.

New Coach Freeze Looking to End SEC Drought

Among the very first impressions new Ole Miss coach Hugh Freeze had was this: The roster he inherited is quite a bit different from the one he left four years before.

Freeze, an assistant on former coach Ed Orgeron's staff, was hired in December to replace Houston Nutt. Freeze, known for being a supporting character in Michael Oher's "The Blind Side" story and for winning the Sun Belt Conference in his one year at Arkansas State, has his work cut out for him.

"I know we don't look like we did when I was here before, physically," Freeze said.

"I don't know what that means yet, but I know walking in there we don't look like we did when we were here with Michael Oher and Peria Jerry and John Jerry and Patrick Willis and Mike Wallace. It's a different looking team."

Some of those guys were building blocks for Nutt as he went to back-to-back Cotton Bowls in his first two seasons at Ole Miss. But the bottom fell out when Orgeron's recruits left, and Ole Miss stumbled to 4-8 and 2-10 seasons in 2010 and '11, respectively.

The Rebels have lost 15 in a row in the SEC, a school record, and three straight to rival Mississippi State.

Turning it around is likely going to take time and patience, even if Freeze did find a way to win immediately at Arkansas State (which had never won 10 games before) and Lambuth (an NAIA school that no longer exists). Credit an ability to motivate and inspire, making young men believe they can play with anyone and overcome significant obstacles.

In an attempt to show off the future of the program, Nutt played as many freshmen and sophomores as possible last season. As a result, Freeze takes over a roster that has been through the SEC battles.

Most of those players, though, would have been redshirted or used only on special teams at most other schools in the conference.

Some of them, like wide receiver Donte Moncrief and defensive end C.J. Johnson, are better for it and should stand to flourish in their second seasons in the SEC. Others will need to be developed, adding size, speed and strength in order to compete. Or Freeze will have to recruit players who do look like the future NFL standouts that once dotted this roster.

Either way, it is going to take time and patience.

OFFENSE

Halfway through spring practice, Freeze decided enough was enough and stopped halfway through installing his up-tempo, spread offense.

He complained that every time he tried to add a new piece of the attack, it threw everything else off. Freeze had a point, even if it was probably to be expected anytime you take a roster recruited to play a more traditional pro-style set and try to teach them an offense that has been termed basketball on grass.

There was progress made, especially at quarterback. What was once a four-man competition has been trimmed to two with Zack Stoudt's back problems and Randall Mackey's move to wide receiver knocking both out of contention.

Bo Wallace and Barry Brunetti remain in a virtual dead heat heading into fall camp.

Wallace redshirted at Arkansas State in 2010 and set records at East Mississippi Community College, then had a very good Grove Bowl spring game — 16 of 26, 240 yards, two touchdowns.

Mike Marry
Photo by RD Moore

Brunetti started the first and last games of the 2011 season and excelled early in camp, but a 78-yard run was his only highlight in the spring game. Wallace probably understands the offense better than anyone and has a much stronger arm, but Brunetti can make plays on the run and is well-liked by his teammates.

Running back Jeff Scott led the team with 529 yards in 10 games last season.

Ole Miss lost the only other two backs with significant experience to graduation, so Scott's backups will be a combination of true freshmen and other seldom-used players.

A real position of depth is at wide receiver, led by sophomore Donte Moncrief. He set a freshman record for catches (31) and also led the team in touchdowns and receiving yards. He and Ja-Mes Logan give either Wallace or Brunetti two vertical threats (Freeze has said he wants to throw the ball deep three times a quarter).

Mackey will be used in the slot, take handoffs and even field a snap in Wildcat formations; almost immediately he established himself as one of the best athletes with the ball in his hands.

There's also tight end Jamal Mosley, who can line up in a variety of formations, and a handful of slot receivers that have underperformed up to now in their careers.

The line lost three starters, most notably right tackle Bobby Massie. Left guard Aaron Morris has potential and right tackle Pierce Burton plays with an edge previously lacking. But the group struggled throughout spring practice with how fast Freeze wants the offense to run, and defending pass rushers coming off the edge remains an issue.

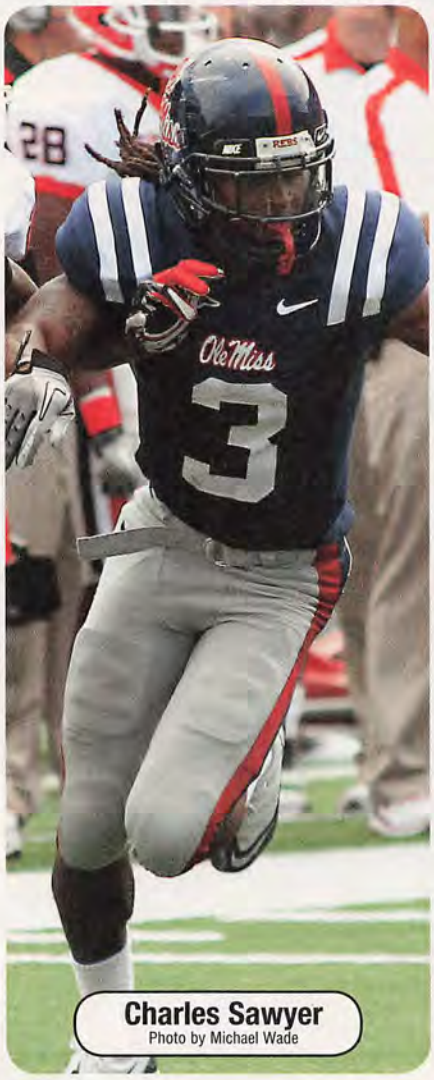
The line remains the biggest question mark coming into the fall, and could be a work in progress throughout the season.

DEFENSE

The architect of Ole Miss' defense, Dave Wommack, has been doing this for nearly 30 years. He's built defenses at Southern Miss, Arkansas, Georgia Tech and Arkansas State. At his last stop, in just one season, the Red Wolves went from outside of the top-100 in total defense to No. 24 nationally.

So he has a good idea of what he's doing, and how you go about turning around an Ole Miss defense that gave up 419.3 yards a game last season, the worst in the SEC and 90th nationally. Wommack has not ventured far from the 4-2-5 defense his predecessor, Tyrone Nix, implemented a year ago, but he seems to be taking more of a building-block approach.

"Five or six guys I feel good about, that they could really help us win in the SEC," Wommack said. "We'll just keep building it from there."



Charles Sawyer
Photo by Michael Wade

SCOUTING REPORT: Offense

POS	STARTER	YR.	COMMENT	BACKUP/KEY DEPTH
QB	Barry Brunetti	Jr.	Started two games last season; competition tight.	Bo Wallace, So.
RB	Jeff Scott*	Jr.	Ran for 529 yards in 10 games in 2011.	I'Tavius Mathers, Fr.
WR	Donte Moncrief*	So.	Promising player should flourish in spread offense.	Vince Sanders, So.
WR	Ja-Mes Logan	Jr.	Should be a vertical threat this season.	Terrell Grant, Jr.
WR	Randall Mackey*	Sr.	X-factor: Converted QB will be used everywhere.	Korvic Neat, Jr.
TE	Jamal Mosley*	Sr.	Has great size/speed but needs to produce.	Ferbia Allen, Sr.*
LT	Emmanuel McCray	Jr.	New coaches already love his work ethic.	Robert Conyers, Fr.
LG	Aaron Morris	So.	May be next Ole Miss lineman to make it in the NFL.	Justin Bell, Fr.
C	Evan Swindall*	Jr.	Started the final seven games in 2011.	Chase Hughes, So.
RG	A.J. Hawkins	Sr.	The most consistent blocker in the spring.	Jared Duke, Jr.
RT	Pierce Burton	Jr.	Junior college star began career at San Jose State.	Patrick Junen, Jr.*
K	Bryson Rose*	Sr.	Had a streak of 17 consecutive made field goals.	Andrew Ritter, Sr.

*Returning Starter

SCOUTING REPORT: Defense

POS	STARTER	YR.	COMMENT	BACKUP/KEY DEPTH
DE	C.J. Johnson	So.	Has a tremendous burst off the edge.	Jason Jones, Sr.
DT	Bryon Bennett*	So.	Not flashy, but solid and dependable.	Carlton Martin, So.
DT	Uriah Grant	Sr.	A natural leader on a young unit.	Woodrow Hamilton, Fr.
DE	Channing Ward	Fr.	Four-star prospect should start immediately.	Cameron Whigham, Jr.
LB	Mike Marry*	Jr.	Led team with 81 tackles in 2011.	R. Williams, So./J. Kight, Sr.*
LB	Aaron Garbutt*	Sr.	Converted safety brings more speed to defense.	Serderius Bryant, So.
S/LB	Brishen Mathews	Jr.	Healthy after back injury ruined his 2011 season.	Ivan Nicholas, Sr.
CB	Wesley Pendleton*	Sr.	Best combination of speed, strength.	Trae Elston, Fr.
CB	Nickolas Brassell*	So.	Missed spring with academic problems.	Dehendret Collins, Jr.
SS	Charles Sawyer*	Jr.	Could emerge as All-SEC level defender.	Frank Crawford, Jr.
FS	Chief Brown	Fr.	Redshirt season made him better.	Cody Prewitt, So.
P	Tyler Campbell*	Sr.	Averaged 43.6 yards on 72 punts.	Andrew Ritter, Sr.

*Returning Starter

REBELS RECRUITING 2012 rivals.com

3 NEWCOMERS OF IMPACT

Channing Ward
A potentially dominant defensive end, Ward was the marquee signee for this Ole Miss class and first-year coach Hugh Freeze. Ward has the size, speed and overall athletic ability to hit the field immediately in Oxford. Ultimately, he has all-conference potential. He easily is among the most explosive players nationally for 2012.

I'Tavius Mathers
Mathers is a nice-sized running back and four-star prospect who could become an every-down back in the SEC. He rushed for 2,210 yards and 25 touchdowns during his senior season and finished with more than 5,500 yards for his career. Mathers can do a little bit of everything, which will make him a valuable asset at Ole Miss.

Jaylen Walton
Walton is an outstanding all-purpose back, who will give the offensive staff at Ole Miss a dangerous weapon who can hurt an opposing defense in many ways. Walton is extremely quick, is a terrific cutter and does his best work in the open field or in space. He's a big play waiting to happen.

THE SLEEPER

Mike Hilton
Hilton is an underrated talent from Georgia with the ability to help Ole Miss out on either side of the ball. He might play cornerback or possibly be an all-purpose back or slot receiver for the Rebels, and would probably become a fine player at either spot, even though he isn't very big. Most likely, he will end up on defense.

Committments	18
Average Stars	2.94
★★★★★	0
★★★★☆	2
★★★☆☆	13
★★☆☆☆	3
Total Stars	53
National Rank: NR	SEC: 13

2013 NEEDS: The truth is, Ole Miss has many great needs. But if you were to pick a few at the top of the list, quarterback, offensive line and running back would come to mind. At QB, every Rebels signal caller is a junior or senior, meaning they'll want to bring in one or two in this cycle. Up front on offense, four of the projected five starters are juniors or older, making this a critical year. Ole Miss also is hoping to land two or three running backs.

by Keith Niebuhr/rivals.com

Name	Pos	Ht	Wt	Stars	Hometown	School
Darone Bailey	OL	6-6	315	★★★	Clarksdale, MS	Coahoma C.C.
Switched commitment from Kentucky to Ole Miss…Attended Cleveland (Miss.) East Side before junior college.						
Quintavius Burdette	ATH	5-10	179	★★	Senatobia, MS	Senatobia
Followed Ole Miss coach Hugh Freeze to Ole Miss after originally committing to play for him at Arkansas State.						
Pierce Burton	OL	6-7	290	★★★	San Francisco, CA	City College of San Francisco
Chose Ole Miss over Florida, Indiana, Kentucky, West Virginia and others…Signed with San Jose State out of Sacramento (Calif.) Rio Americano High School in 2009.						
Dehendret Collins	DB	5-11	175	★★★	Wesson, MS	Copiah-Lincoln C.C.
Had six interceptions in 2011…Switched commitment to Ole Miss from Louisiana Tech. Also had offers from Iowa State and Troy.						
Robert Conyers	OL	6-5	277	★★★	Miami, FL	Braddock
Rated as the nation's No. 62 offensive tackle by Rivals.com…Chose Ole Miss over Cincinnati, Duke, Illinois, Kentucky, Michigan State, USF, Vanderbilt, Wake Forest, West Virginia and others.						
Cody Core	WR	6-3	175	★★	Auburn, AL	Auburn
Chose Ole Miss over Arkansas State, Kentucky and Troy…Participated in the Alabama-Mississippi All-Star Classic.						
Trae Elston	DB	6-0	183	★★★	Oxford, AL	Oxford
Rated as the No. 14 prospect in Alabama by Rivals.com…Rated as the nation's No. 28 safety…Participated in the Under Armour All-American Game…Had 104 tackles and three interceptions as a junior.						
Issac Gross	DT	6-3	270	★★★	Batesville, MS	South Panola
Rated as the No. 5 prospect in Mississippi by Rivals.com…Rated as the nation's No. 25 defensive tackle…Participated in the Under Armour All-American Game…Participated in the Alabama-Mississippi All-Star Classic.						
Mike Hilton	ATH	5-9	175	★★★	Tyrone, GA	Sandy Creek
Rated as the No. 71 prospect in Georgia by Rivals.com…Chose Ole Miss over Cincinnati, Kentucky, Mississippi State, Southern Miss and others.						

Name	Pos	Ht	Wt	Stars	Hometown	School
Kenno Loyal	RB	5-10	234	★★★	Decatur, GA	Columbia
Rated as the nation's No. 3 fullback by Rivals.com…Chose Ole Miss over Georgia Tech, Kentucky, Louisville, Minnesota, Penn State, Purdue, Virginia Tech and others.						
I'Tavius Mathers	RB	6-0	195	★★★★	Murfreesboro, TN	Blackman
Rated as the No. 7 prospect in Tennessee by Rivals.com…Rated as the nation's No. 20 running back…Rushed for 2,253 yards and 27 touchdowns as a senior after racking up 2,614 rushing yards with 29 touchdowns as a junior.						
Anthony Standifer	CB	6-1	178	★★★	Crete, IL	Crete Monee
Rated as the No. 14 prospect in Illinois by Rivals.com…Rated as the nation's No. 45 cornerback…Late addition to the Ole Miss class.						
Ben Still	OL	6-3	285	★★★	Memphis, TN	Memphis University School
Chose Ole Miss over Memphis, Tulane and Western Kentucky…Son of former Tennessee offensive lineman Eric Still.						
Temario Strong	DE	6-2	210	★★★	Batesville, MS	South Panola
Rated as the No. 5 prospect in Mississippi by Rivals.com…Participated in the Alabama-Mississippi All-Star Classic.						
Bo Wallace	QB	6-5	215	★★★	Scooba, MS	East Mississippi C.C.
Rated as the nation's No. 46 junior college prospect by Rivals.com…Chose Ole Miss over Baylor, Indiana, Mississippi State and others…Enrolled at Ole Miss in January.						
Jaylen Walton	RB	5-8	164	★★★	Memphis, TN	Ridgeway
Rated as the No. 12 prospect in Tennessee by Rivals.com…Rated as the nation's No. 8 all-purpose back…Rushed for 2,235 yards and 23 touchdowns as a junior.						
Channing Ward	DE	6-4	250	★★★★	Aberdeen, MS	Aberdeen
Rivals100 selection…Rated as the No. 1 prospect in Mississippi…Rated as the nation's No. 4 strongside defensive end… Participated in the Under Armour All-American Game…Participated in the Alabama-Mississippi All-Star Classic…Chose Ole Miss over Alabama, Auburn, LSU and Mississippi State.						
John Youngblood	DE	6-5	230	★★	Trussville, AL	Hewitt Trussville
Recorded 131 tackles and 15 tackles for loss as a senior…Switched commitment to Ole Miss from UCF and also had offers from Arkansas State, Memphis, Troy and UAB.						

REBELS SPRING ROSTER

No.	Name	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.	Hometown
83	Ferbia Allen	TE	6-4	250	Sr.	Pine Bluff, AR
73	Darone Bailey	OL	6-6	315	Jr.	Cleveland
86	Tyler Baker	WR	5-9	180	Fr.	Bullard, TX
29	Abdul Bangura	DB	5-8	177	Fr.	Takoma Park, MD
68	Justin Bell	OL	6-2	337	Fr.	Jackson
95	Bryon Bennett	DT	6-2	294	So.	Madison
48	Justin Bigham	FB	6-4	240	Jr.	West Helena, AR
2	Nickolas Brassell	WR/CB	6-0	172	So.	Batesville
8	Chief Brown	DB	6-0	193	Fr.	Winona
57	Terrell Brown	DT	6-10	377	Sr.	Drew
11	Barry Brunetti	QB	6-0	215	Jr.	Memphis, TN
14	Serderius Bryant	LB	5-10	223	So.	Sanford, FL
17	Tanner Burns	DB	6-1	186	Sr.	San Jose, CA
71	Pierce Burton	OL	6-7	290	Jr.	Sacramento, CA
41	Billy Busch	FB	5-11	232	So.	St. Louis, MO
97	Tyler Campbell	P	6-2	220	Sr.	Little Rock, AR
12	Cliff Coleman	DB	5-10	188	So.	Lauderale Lakes, FL
1	Dehendret Collins	DB	5-11	175	Jr.	Meadville
94	Chris Conley	P	5-8	190	Jr.	Bradenton, FL
5	Frank Crawford	DB	6-0	180	Jr.	Miami, FL
59	Will Denny	LS	5-10	240	So.	Jackson
25	Eric Dietz	RB	5-8	190	Fr.	Humboldt, TN
74	Jared Duke	OL	6-7	335	Jr.	Cleveland, TN
82	Dylan Dyer	TE	6-4	247	Jr.	Flora
33	E.J. Epperson	FB	6-2	250	Sr.	Humboldt, TN
58	Corey Gaines	OL	6-1	312	Jr.	Tallahassee, FL
20	Aaron Garbutt	DB	6-2	200	Sr.	Westminster, CA
67	Chris Gill	OL	6-4	295	Jr.	Appleton, WI
21	Senquez Golson	DB	6-0	180	So.	Pascagoula
46	Tyriek Gracia	LB	6-1	204	So.	Hialeah, FL
81	Terrell Grant	WR	6-2	210	Jr.	Cleveland
93	Uriah Grant	DL	6-0	287	Sr.	Miramar, FL
45	H.R. Greer	FB	5-11	235	Sr.	Olive Branch
75	Matt Hall	OL	6-9	335	Sr.	Russellville, AR
63	Mitch Hall	OL	6-6	315	Fr.	Russellville, AR
56	Woodrow Hamilton	DL	6-3	295	Fr.	Raleigh
76	A.J. Hawkins	OL	6-3	315	Sr.	Lithonia, GA
64	Jacob Hickman	LS	5-10	248	Jr.	Carriere
83	Jordan Holder	WR	5-10	178	Jr.	Bay Springs
30	Kyle Horine	DB	5-9	200	Sr.	Kingwood, TX
65	Chase Hughes	C	6-2	305	So.	Springville, AL
50	Ethan Hutson	OL	6-3	305	Fr.	Destrehan, LA
19	Evan Ingram	QB	6-1	220	So.	Gray, LA
10	C.J. Johnson	LB	6-1	231	So.	Philadelphia
53	Jason Jones	DE	6-2	255	Sr.	Albany, GA
62	Jimel Judon	OL	6-4	315	Fr.	Myrtle
77	Patrick Junen	OL	6-6	320	Jr.	Huntsville, AL
24	Houston Keyes	RB	5-7	158	So.	Ridgeland
15	Joel Kight	LB	5-9	226	Sr.	Lithonia, GA
45	Josh Lancaster	LB	5-8	220	Sr.	Mobile, AL
24	Keith Lewis	LB	6-2	233	So.	Tampa, FL
85	Ja-Mes Logan	WR	6-2	190	Jr.	Houston, TX
1	Randall Mackey	QB	5-11	195	Sr.	Bastrop, LA
52	Mike Marry	LB	6-2	248	Jr.	Clearwater, FL
92	Carlton Martin	DT	6-1	295	So.	Madison
49	Will Martin	LB	6-0	210	Jr.	Madison
13	Brishen Mathews	DB	5-11	200	Jr.	Monticello, AR
70	Emmanuel McCray	OL	6-5	319	Jr.	Jackson
9	Malkhail Miller	QB	6-3	235	Fr.	Fulton
12	Donte Moncrief	WR	6-2	214	So.	Raleigh
16	Collins Moore	WR	6-1	187	So.	Madison, AL
22	Philander Moore	WR	5-11	190	Jr.	Austin, TX
72	Aaron Morris	OL	6-5	325	So.	Jackson
17	Jamal Mosley	TE	6-4	260	Sr.	Memphis, TN
28	Korvic Neat	WR	5-8	160	Jr.	Hallandale, FL
9	Ivan Nicholas	S	5-11	201	Sr.	Jacksonville, FL
4	Denzel Nkemdiche	DB	5-10	197	Fr.	Loganville, GA
27	Sam Noblin	LB	6-2	220	So.	Ocean Springs
26	Ryan Nowicki	K	6-0	171	Fr.	Peachtree City, GA
84	Jack Nuismer	TE	6-2	234	Jr.	Nashville, TN
4	Nicholas Parker	RB	5-11	235	So.	Batesville
36	John Peloza	TE	6-4	256	So.	Plano, TX
99	Gilbert Pena	DT	6-2	326	Sr.	Yonkers, NY
6	Wesley Pendleton	DB	5-11	180	Sr.	Natchez
80	Josh Pinkston	WR	6-2	185	So.	Forest
26	Jimmy Potepa	RB	5-8	202	Fr.	Monrovia, Liberia
25	Cody Prewitt	DB	6-3	210	So.	Bay Springs
97	Josh Price	DE	6-3	290	Fr.	Columbia
88	John Ratliff	WR	6-0	181	Fr.	Fort Worth, TX
13	Robert Ratliff	QB	6-0	215	Jr.	Fort Worth, TX
20	Jeremy Reed	WR	5-7	150	Jr.	Southaven
96	Andrew Ritter	K/P	6-3	223	Sr.	Jackson
90	Gerald Rivers	DE	6-5	250	Sr.	Ellenwood, GA
81	Bryson Rose	K	5-11	202	Sr.	Raleigh, NC
43	Taylor Rotenberry	FB	6-0	235	Fr.	Batesville
10	Vince Sanders	WR	6-1	190	So.	Macon
3	Charles Sawyer	DB	5-11	175	Jr.	Miami, FL
44	Charlie Scott	FB	6-0	220	Fr.	Jackson
3	Jeff Scott	RB	5-7	175	Jr.	Miami, FL
38	D.T. Shackelford	LB	6-1	250	Jr.	Decatur, AL
39	Josh Shipp	DB	6-0	190	Jr.	Batesville
7	Tobias Singleton	WR	6-0	190	So.	Madison
8	Zack Stoudt	QB	6-4	222	Sr.	Dublin, OH
54	Walker Sturgeon	DE	6-1	254	So.	Horn Lake
56	Evan Swindall	C	6-2	300	Jr.	LaFayette, GA
37	Matt Tarpley	WR	5-9	175	Jr.	Minneapolis, MN
29	Devin Thomas	RB	5-9	209	Sr.	San Antonio, TX
54	Carlos Thompson	DE	6-4	250	Jr.	Hollandale
14	Bo Wallace	QB	6-5	210	So.	Pulaski, TN
98	Taurus Ward	DT	6-2	320	Sr.	Aberdeen
30	D'Lyle Washington	RB	5-7	178	Fr.	Carrollton, TX
19	Justin Watts	K	6-0	180	Fr.	Suwanee, GA
55	Cameron Whigham	DE	6-2	255	Jr.	Snellville, GA
21	Zarold Wilder	RB	5-6	173	Fr.	Powder Springs, GA
87	Alex Williams	TE	6-4	230	Jr.	Tallahassee, FL
44	Ralph Williams	LB	6-0	238	So.	Miami, FL
61	Derrick Wilson	OL	6-3	305	Jr.	Greenville
31	Rudy Wilson	LB	5-11	215	Sr.	Port Orange, FL

INDIVIDUAL STATS

PASSING

	GP	Effic	Cmp	Att	Int	Pct	Yards	TD	Long	Avg/G
R. Mackey	9	118.39	77	155	5	49.7	1112	7	59	123.6
Z. Stoudt	6	79.63	58	120	8	48.3	559	2	47	93.2

RECEIVING

	GP	No.	Yards	Avg	TD	Long	Avg/G
D. Moncrief	12	31	454	14.6	4	57	37.8
N. Brassell	12	24	336	14.0	2	59	28.0
J. Logan	12	20	274	13.7	0	46	22.8

RUSHING

	GP	Att.	Gain	Loss	Net	Avg	TD	Long	Avg/G
J. Scott	10	116	585	56	529	4.6	6	69	52.9
B. Bolden	10	96	511	49	462	4.8	4	38	46.2
R. Mackey	9	83	360	180	180	2.2	1	28	20.0

DEF. LEADERS

Tackles: M. Marry 81, C. Sawyer 70, D. Jackson 64
Tackles for loss: M. Marry 5, W. Dorsey 5, two tied with 4.5
Sacks: W. Dorsey 3, M. Marry 2, G. Rivers 2
Interceptions: C. Sawyer 4, M. Temple 2, four tied with 1

NOTEBOOK

Hugh Freeze made it explicitly clear that he was looking for fit beyond resume as he put together his coaching staff.

Both came together with the hiring of co-offensive coordinator and quarterbacks coach **Dan Werner**. The two worked together at Ole Miss from 2006-07 under former coach **Ed Orgeron** and developed a close relationship.

When Werner's wife passed away suddenly and left Werner a single parent of two young children, he chose to take a coaching job at a nearby high school and remain in Oxford. Werner, who has worked at Miami and Auburn as well, was able to get back into college coaching while not uprooting his children.

"At this stage of my life and career, I was not going to move," said Werner, who indicated he had opportunities before now to get back into the college coaching ranks.

• Linebacker **D.T. Shackelford** had to undergo a second surgery to repair a torn ACL before spring practice began. Shackelford first suffered the injury near the end of 2011's spring practices and redshirted his junior season.

His status for the fall is unknown, and his absence from the field deprives the Rebels of an impact defender and charismatic leader.

• Freeze's contract contains an unusual provision beyond his $1.5 million base salary: Ole Miss will pay the coach $100,000 per SEC win during the next four years (the maximum length for a contract under state law).

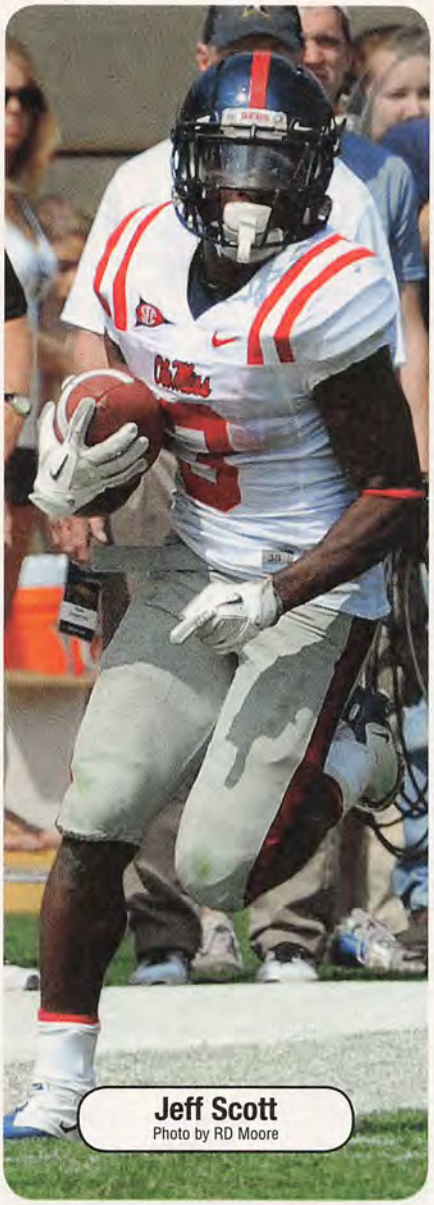
• Matt Hall started 12 games as a junior at right guard and was expected to be a key returnee. But Hall left the team after dressing out but not participating in several weeks of spring drills. Freeze said Hall would try to graduate in the summer and had the staff's support.

• The campus-wide speed limit of 18 miles an hour, honoring legendary QB Archie Manning, was adjusted for one road: Manning Way. The road past the school's practice facility now is 10 miles an hour — the number Archie's son, Eli, wore.

OPPOSING COACHES VIEW

• **On former coach Houston Nutt:** "People bash (former Ole Miss coach) Ed Orgeron, but he knew how to recruit and evaluate. Houston Nutt took Ed's team to the Cotton Bowl twice and beyond that Nutt didn't do anything. He ran the program in the ground."

• **On the quarterback play:** "They have a fairly decent collection of talent, but they struggled at QB last year. They tried to find a way to be productive on offense without having a true QB. Thing about the state of Mississippi in general is they have so many defensive-type kids in that state; they're going to be talented on defense. They find linebackers and defensive linemen and defensive backs. They're everywhere, even though the state is not populous. Problem is, other than Archie Manning, they never had a great QB that went to Ole Miss or Miss State."



Jeff Scott
Photo by RD Moore

Wommack won't name names among that group, but it's fair to suggest Charles Sawyer is among the select few.

Sawyer intercepted a team-high four passes as a sophomore while playing cornerback and safety. Now at the latter out of necessity, Sawyer brings a coverage mentality to the position. It's not uncommon to see him reading the quarterback and flying across the field to make a play for the ball.

Nickolas Brassell started at wide receiver and cornerback as a freshman, but Freeze calls him an NFL-level corner. Brassell missed most of the spring, though, as he dealt with academic issues, leading to uncertainty about his status for the fall. Ole Miss will have senior Wesley Pendleton, a former junior college signee who was named the MVP of the defense during the spring.

Mike Marry is about as solid and dependable as they come at middle linebacker, registering a team-high 81 tackles last year. He's lost weight, too, and should be less of a liability in pass coverage. Wommack is still searching for the right answer alongside Marry, but converted safety Aaron Garbutt and Serderius Bryant impressed in the spring.

Ole Miss registered only 13 sacks in 2011, a number that has to improve.

Look for youth to carry the day along the defensive line tasked with improving that total. Defensive end Channing Ward is a four-star in-state prospect and the jewel of Ole Miss' recruiting class; he should start from day one.

C.J. Johnson, the most highly touted prospect in the class of 2011, is a converted linebacker with a high ceiling at end. Defensive line coach Chris Kiffin has told Johnson that he could be like the Indianapolis Colts' Dwight Freeney.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Special teams is not something for Freeze to worry much about heading into his first season.

Tyler Campbell is a four-year punter who has annually ranked among the

BEST & BRIGHTEST

MOST VALUABLE PLAYER

SS Charles Sawyer

The athletic junior from Miami will start at strong safety but can play cornerback. ... Intercepted four passes and broke up 13 others while moving between safety and corner. ... Ole Miss' Conerly Trophy nominee, awarded annually to state's best player. ... Best skill is his ability to cover, crucial as teams use more spread principles. ... Not a flashy player, but a solid "follow him" kind of leader. ... Should merit All-SEC consideration.

EMERGING STAR

DE C.J. Johnson

Sophomore from Philadelphia, Miss., should start at defensive end. ... Played in 11 games as a true freshman, starting the last three, and recorded 32 tackles, including four for loss, and one sack. ... Was a consensus prep All-American and five-star prospect as a linebacker. ... After relying on speed and strength in 2011, has begun to learn pass-rushing skills. ... Still a work in progress, but the burst off the edge is obvious and impossible to ignore.

TOP NEWCOMER

DE Channing Ward

A four-star prospect from in-state Aberdeen High School, Ward was unquestionably the top player in the Rebels' class of 2012. ... An Under Armour All-American, Ward announced his commitment to the school at the game. ... Won't be handed the starting job at end, but at 6-4, 250 has a college-ready body. ... Brother Taurus is a senior defensive tackle. His presence helped Ward to feel comfortable choosing Ole Miss over Alabama, Auburn and Mississippi State, among others.

2009 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	29.5	39
Rushing	183.6	32
Passing	218.8	57
Total	402.4	44
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	17.7	15
Rushing	140.3	58
Passing	174.4	15
Total	314.7	21
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
- 7	- 0.54	102

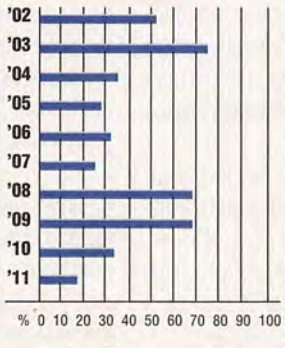
2010 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	30.6	41
Rushing	207.6	18
Passing	192.3	82
Total	399.8	43
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	35.2	107
Rushing	152.8	61
Passing	246.3	103
Total	399.2	81
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
- 6	- 0.5	88

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	16.1	116
Rushing	129.6	83
Passing	151.7	107
Total	281.3	114
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	32.1	96
Rushing	224.9	112
Passing	194.4	22
Total	419.3	90
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
- 8	- 0.67	100

10-YEAR WINNING TREND



RESULTS

2-10, 0-8

L	BYU	13-14
W	Southern Illinois	42-24
L	at Vanderbilt	7-30
L	Georgia	13-27
W	at Fresno State	38-28
L	Alabama	7-52
L	Arkansas	24-29
L	at Auburn	23-41
L	at Kentucky	13-30
L	Louisiana Tech	7-27
L	LSU	3-52
L	at Mississippi State	3-31

PLAYER PROFILE

Donte Moncrief
Photo by RD Moore

Moncrief Expected to Flourish in New System

Donte Moncrief had a fine start to his Ole Miss career — 31 catches (a school freshman record) for 454 yards and four touchdowns.

Now, the 6-2, 214-pound Moncrief, more than anyone else, should flourish in the up-tempo spread offense that new coach Hugh Freeze used at Arkansas State. And check out some of these numbers from Arkansas State: The Red Wolves' leading receiver last season, Dwayne Frampton, caught 94 passes.

Maybe something like that is in store for Moncrief.

Freeze, quite simply, is going to throw the ball more than former coach Houston Nutt. And he's likely to settle on a quarterback, something Nutt did not do in 2011 (Moncrief caught passes from three different quarterbacks, all of whom started multiple games).

Moncrief never complained, but just went about his business. That did not surprise his new coach.

"He kinda just goes about his work every day," Freeze said. "He doesn't have to tell people about it. He just does it. I'm very pleased with him."

Moncrief has gained weight and increased his arm strength in an effort to better create separation coming off the line of scrimmage. He was primarily a vertical and sideline threat last season, but he did more across the middle during spring practice.

While some have struggled with picking up the offense that allowed Frampton and others to post gaudy numbers at Arkansas State, Moncrief seems set for the challenge.

"It's basically just being conditioned, being in shape and being able to run full speed," Moncrief said. "If you can't do that, it's going to be hard to play in this offense."

Progress was evident during the Grove Bowl. Moncrief caught a 1-yard touchdown pass when he had to push off the cornerback, then caught a 23-yard touchdown pass in overtime. He also had a 44-yard reception over the top of the defense.

"Donte came up and made a lot of really good plays," said quarterback Bo Wallace, a midyear junior college enrollee. "He really helped me out a lot."

Either Wallace or Barry Brunetti will win the starting quarterback job. Both have already figured out, though, that the quiet one lined up outside and wearing No. 12 is someone that can get the ball over and over and over again.

best nationally in terms of total yardage. He punted an incredible 72 times last season and ranked fifth in the SEC with a 43.6-yard average. His focus for some time has been better placement; he made progress in 2011, putting 28 punts inside the 20 yard line.

Kicker Bryson Rose made 17 consecutive field-goal attempts, one shy of the SEC record.

So what's the problem? It took Rose from midway through 2010 to nearly the end of 2011 to get that many opportunities. Rose has the leg: he easily made a 50-yard field goal during the Grove Bowl.

SCHEDULE ANALYSIS

The SEC is the most difficult conference in the country in which to make substantial progress from year-to-year. That's Ole Miss' problem, even more so with Texas A&M joining the SEC West this season.

The Rebels could find themselves 3-1 after nonconference play: Central Arkansas and UTEP at home and Tulane on the road are should-wins; there's also a home date against Texas.

The problem is the SEC schedule: at Alabama in week 5 and at LSU in week 12. Arkansas and Georgia are also on the road, and Vanderbilt has always caused problems for Ole Miss.

Then there is the Egg Bowl: Ole Miss has lost three in a row for the first time since WWII. Freeze needs to win that one.

— Hugh Kellenberger

SCHEDULE

Date	Opponent	'11 Record
Sept. 1	CENTRAL ARKANSAS	9-4
Sept. 8	UTEP	5-7
Sept. 15	TEXAS	8-5
Sept. 22	at Tulane	2-11
Sept. 29	at Alabama	12-1
Oct. 6	TEXAS A&M	7-6
Oct. 13	AUBURN	8-5
Oct. 27	at Arkansas	11-2
Nov. 3	at Georgia	10-4
Nov. 10	VANDERBILT	6-7
Nov. 17	at LSU	13-1
Nov. 24	MISSISSIPPI STATE	7-6

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MISSISSIPPI STATE BULLDOGS

For more coverage of the Bulldogs, visit mississippistate.rivals.com

OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Les Koenning **DEFENSIVE COORDINATORS: Chris Wilson, Geoff Collins** **STADIUM: Davis-Wade Stadium: 55,082**

AT A GLANCE

2011:
7-6, 2-6 SEC (5th, West)

COACH:
Dan Mullen: At Mississippi State and overall: 21-17, 3 years

RETURNING STARTERS:
12; 4 offense, 7 defense, punter

PLAYERS TO WATCH:
QB Tyler Russell, WR Joe Morrow, OG Tobias Smith, TE Malcolm Johnson, DE Denico Autry, DT Josh Boyd, CB Johnthan Banks, S Nickoe Whitley

PRIMARY STRENGTHS:
The receivers finally appear to be in sync with Russell in the passing game, and the tight end position has suddenly become a key to chewing up yards and finding mismatches in the middle of the field. The defensive line, led by Boyd, is deep. Banks is an All-American candidate in the secondary.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS:
Russell can throw the ball, but will he have the time needed to do so? The offensive line is a mess — position coach John Hevesy moved players around all spring looking for the right mix — and Smith, the best lineman, missed spring practices as he recovered from an ACL injury he suffered in the fall. Depth is a concern at safety.

KEY LOSSES:
QB Chris Relf, RB Vick Ballard, C Quentin Saulsberry, DT Fletcher Cox, LB Brandon Wilson, K Derek DePasquale

OVERVIEW:
The offense is undergoing a small tweak with a pass-first approach, but if it struggles early, the Bulldogs can lean on their strong defense as they did in 2011. Winning seven games would be considered a disappointment, especially with a favorable early schedule. The back half of the season will tell the tale about how successful the Bulldogs are.

Bulldogs Look to Put 'Disappointing' 2011 in Rear View

The Mississippi State offense has not undergone a major overhaul, but it certainly looks different.

"We've changed a whole bunch offensively, as you can see," offensive coordinator Les Koenning said at the end of spring practice. "We're flinging the ball around."

The Bulldogs, for the first time in the Dan Mullen era, are adjusting to a pass-first mentality.

Four senior receivers return, and with pro-type quarterback Tyler Russell at the controls, the Bulldogs looked downright dangerous throwing the football in spring drills. Whether that means they can do the same in the rugged SEC — the passing offense ranked 94th nationally last season — remains to be seen.

"You have a quarterback who throws the ball well, and an experienced group of wide receivers," Mullen said. "So as we view things, you're looking more to throw the football than you have."

The motivating factor behind the change — beyond, well, the need to produce more points — is the "disappointing" 7-6 season the Bulldogs put together in 2011.

MSU had aspirations of breaking through against the likes of Alabama, Arkansas and LSU after a nine-win season in 2010, but its offense struggled to score points as the Bulldogs continued to run a two-quarterback system with Russell and then-senior Chris Relf.

There also seemed to be a bout of complacency among the team last season, said Mullen, who's entering his fourth season.

"Even though we've made it to a bowl game and won a bowl game, and won three straight Egg Bowls, nobody is patting anybody on the back around here, which happened last offseason," Mullen said.

"So I think there is a little more edge to our guys and they want to take that next step forward."

The goal is to keep building on the success, especially on defense. Coaches talked often in the spring and offseason of the Bulldogs' roster being the deepest it has ever been — a requirement, they said, if they want to win a championship in the SEC.

For the first time since Mullen's arrival, there's an air of change amid the first back-to-back bowl wins in more than a decade. In a conference in which defense rules and wins championships, MSU fans' excitement stems from past success and the promise of a vertical attack on offense.

"I think there is so much up in the air of the exact direction that we're going to take," said Mullen, "but our vision is slightly different than it has been in the past."

OFFENSE

MSU promises to go vertical in the passing game because of the development of its receivers.

Seniors Chad Bumphis (25 catches, 339 yards), Arceto Clark (30 catches, 442 yards) and Chris Smith (35 catches, 330 yards) return after what can easily be termed a disappointing season for the passing game in 2010. The receivers agree.

The Bulldogs nearly pulled the redshirt off freshman receiver Joe Morrow (6-4, 205) late last season, but the coaches decided against their desire to stretch the field in favor of preserving that year of eligibility and not rushing into anything.

"People say I'm a deep threat, but honestly I like short routes because I like to catch it and try to make people miss," said Morrow, a redshirt fresh-

Johnthan Banks
Photo by Michael Wade

man from Ocean Springs, Miss. "But the deep routes, if you leave me, I'll be able to catch it."

Morrow won jump ball after jump ball in spring drills, finishing with 97 yards in the spring game.

Small and shifty receiver Jameon Lewis (5-9, 185) finished with 144 yards in the spring game — one more yard than his total during the entire 2011 season — leaving coaches with the hope that the sophomore has fully grasped the offense and could be an every-down contributor.

Combine Morrow and Lewis with seniors who can pick up first downs, and Mullen likes what he has on the receiver depth chart this season.

"We have a bunch of smaller guys, but now we have the balance you want to have," Mullen said.

Six returning receivers have combined for 284 catches, 3,574 yards and 28 touchdowns during their careers. Their quarterback, Tyler Russell, is expected to be the proper, drop-back quarterback to deliver them the ball after sharing the snaps in 2011 with Chris Relf.

The biggest question remains at running back. Vick Ballard, who set the school record for touchdowns in 2010 and rushed for 1,189 yards and 10 touchdowns in 2011, is gone. Junior LaDarius Perkins will step in as the starter, though he will share playing time with sophomore Nick Griffin and freshman Josh Robinson.

"We're hoping to get the same kind of production Ballard gave us," running backs coach Greg Knox said. "Hopefully, we can find one and then the other ones will play their role."

DEFENSE

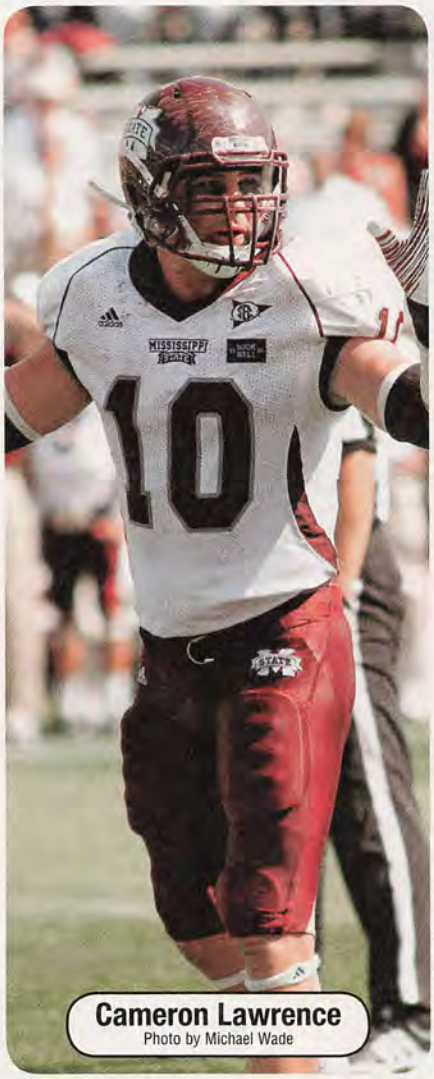
Is it possible that Mississippi State's defense could be better without a first-round draft pick clogging holes and attacking quarterbacks from the defensive line?

That was the word from MSU's players, who are adjusting to life without Fletcher Cox manning the middle of the defensive front.

"I was telling Fletcher when I saw him that I think this defense was going to be the best defense I've played on since I've been here if we get the chemistry right and get everything going," senior cornerback Johnthan Banks said.

Yes, chemistry is an important facet for the defense. Seven starters return from a unit that ranked only eighth in the SEC in total defense (350 yards per game), but it was one of the best red-zone defenses in the SEC and ranked fourth in scoring defense (19.7 points per game).

MSU is stacked up front, where the Bulldogs totaled 21 sacks last season, the eighth-best mark in the SEC. Defen-



Cameron Lawrence
Photo by Michael Wade

SCOUTING REPORT: Offense

POS	STARTER	YR.	COMMENT	BACKUP/KEY DEPTH
QB	Tyler Russell	Jr.	MSU is tailoring the offense around the passer.	Dak Prescott, Fr.
RB	LaDarius Perkins	Jr.	Rushed for 422 yards but only two TDs in 2011.	Nick Griffin, So.
WR	Arceto Clark*	Sr.	Leading receiver with 442 yards in 2011.	Joe Morrow, Fr.
WR	Chad Bumphis*	Sr.	Even he thinks 2011 was disappointing (339 yards).	Brandon Heavens, Sr.
WR	Chris Smith*	Sr.	Russell's former HS teammate and favorite target.	Ricco Sanders, Jr.
TE	Malcolm Johnson	So.	Caught fire with Russell at QB late last season.	Brandon Hill, So.
LT	Blaine Clausell	So.	The time is now after a season as a backup.	Charles Siddoway, Jr.
LG	Gabe Jackson*	Jr.	All-SEC selection and anchor on the line.	Templeton Hardy, Sr.
C	Dillon Day	So.	Could move to guard if Dylan Holley steps up.	Dylan Holley, Jr.
RG	Tobias Smith	Sr.	Missed 10 games in 2011 with an ACL tear.	Ben Beckwith, So.
RT	Damien Robinson	So.	One of Mississippi's top prospects in 2010.	Archie Muniz, So.
K	Devon Bell	Fr.	Freshman kicked a 55-yarder in high school.	Brian Egan, Jr.

*Returning Starter

SCOUTING REPORT: Defense

POS	STARTER	YR.	COMMENT	BACKUP/KEY DEPTH
DE	Kaleb Eulls*	So.	Made 30 tackles in 13 starts last season.	Preston Smith, So.
DT	Josh Boyd*	Sr.	An NFL prospect with 4.5 sacks last season.	Curtis Virges, So.
DT	Devin Jones	Sr.	Made only one start in 2011.	P.J. Jones, So.
DE	Denico Autry	Jr.	Junior college transfer had 41 QB hurries at EMCC.	Shane McCardell, Sr.
LB	Deontae Skinner*	Jr.	Team's fifth-leading tackler last season.	Chris Hughes, Jr.
LB	Ferlando Bohanna	So.	One of most talked-about reserves in last two seasons.	Benardrick McKinney, Fr.
LB	Cameron Lawrence*	Sr.	Knack for reading offenses is unmatched on the D.	Matthew Wells, So.
CB	Johnthan Banks*	Sr.	Team-leading five interceptions last season.	Jamerson Love, So.
CB	Corey Broomfield*	Sr.	Did not record an interception but is an All-SEC type.	Darius Slay, Sr.
SS	Louis Watson	Sr.	Depth an issue, but Watson impressed in spring.	Dee Arrington, So.
FS	Nickoe Whitley*	Jr.	Achilles' injury ended season prematurely.	Jay Hughes, So.
P	Baker Swedenburg*	Jr.	Averaged 41.8 yards per punt last season.	William Berg, Sr.

*Returning Starter

BULLDOGS RECRUITING 2012 rivals.com

3 NEWCOMERS OF IMPACT

Quay Evans
An early enrollee in Starkville, Evans is among the most talented defensive tackle signees in the country. He's big; he's quick; he's explosive. When focused, he's difficult to contain. Evans has the ability to become an all-conference type of player. He's raw, but the tools are certainly there for him to achieve big things.

Richie Brown
Brown was a key signee for the Bulldogs. Not only was he coveted by several major programs, but he's a very talented player at the inside linebacker position. Brown has legitimate 4.5-second speed in the 40-yard dash, is an intelligent kid and has outstanding instincts. He's the type of player who could be a three-year starter.

Will Redmond
By the time signing day arrived, Redmond was among the South's most sought-after players. He's an incredibly gifted athlete who could play either cornerback or safety at Mississippi State. Redmond has good height, nice length, excellent speed and is a ball-hawk in the secondary. He's also solid in the return game.

THE SLEEPER

Cedric Jiles
Jiles got little press outside of the Magnolia State, but is a smooth defensive back with a good combination of speed and size — much like Redmond. He really could play just about anywhere in the secondary because of those skills, but is probably best suited for cornerback. This is someone with a great feel for the game.

Committments	28
Average Stars	3.04
★★★★★	0
★★★★☆	4
★★★☆☆	21
★★☆☆☆	3
Total Stars	85
National Rank: 30	SEC: 10

2013 NEEDS: Without question, a lot of attention is being put into the receiver position. To be frank, there is a huge need there as the Bulldogs are likely to lose four key players from the 2012 squad. So at the very least, they'd like to bring in the same number — or more — in 2013. Head coach Dan Mullen likes to play eight receivers each game, so there is a high premium on depth at this position. The defensive interior, end and tackle also are key areas of need.

by Keith Niebuhr/rivals.com

Name	Pos	Ht	Wt	Stars	Hometown	School
Nelson Adams	DE	6-5	260	★★★	Brandon, MS	Brandon
Rated as the No. 23 prospect in Mississippi by Rivals.com...Had 96 tackles, 19 tackles for loss and seven sacks as a senior.						
Quadry Antoine	DB	6-1	210	★★★	Belle Chasse, LA	Belle Chasse
Rated as the No. 35 prospect in Louisiana by Rivals.com...Had 76 tackles, nine tackles for loss, two sacks and one interception as a senior.						
Denico Autry	DE	6-6	245	★★★★	Scooba, MS	East Mississippi C.C.
Rated as the nation's No. 2 junior college prospect by Rivals.com...Recorded 81 tackles, 13 tackles for loss and 11 sacks in 2011.						
Devon Bell	K	6-3	180	★★	Vicksburg, MS	Warren Central
Averaged 42.2 yards on 50 punts and made 4 of 7 field goals with a long of 55 yards In 2011...Participated in the Alabama-Mississippi All-Star Classic.						
Torrey Bell	DE	6-5	238	★★★	River Ridge, LA	John Curtis
Had 72 tackles, 18 tackles for loss and 16 sacks as a senior...Chose Mississippi State over Southern Miss.						
Beniquez Brown	ATH	6-2	210	★★★	Florence, AL	Florence
Rated as the No. 17 prospect in Alabama by Rivals.com...Rated as the nation's No. 35 athlete...Participated in the Alabama-Mississippi All-Star Classic.						
Frederick Brown	WR	6-1	166	★★★	Jackson, MS	Jim Hill
Rated as the No. 23 prospect in Mississippi by Rivals.com...Had 24 receptions for 440 yards and five touchdowns as a senior.						
Richie Brown	LB	6-2	223	★★★★	Long Beach, MS	Long Beach
Rated as the No. 4 prospect in Mississippi by Rivals.com...Rated as the nation's No. 12 inside linebacker...Participated in the Alabama-Mississippi All-Star Classic.						
Ryan Brown	DE	6-5	240	★★★	Marrero, LA	Archbishop Shaw
Rated as the No. 28 prospect in Louisiana by Rivals.com...Had 36 tackles, nine tackles for loss and seven sacks as a senior...Had 51 tackles, nine tackles for loss and four sacks as a junior.						
Cole Carter	OL	6-6	285	★★	Caledonia, MS	Caledonia
Played tight end and multiple positions along the offensive and defensive line as a senior...Participated in the Alabama-Mississippi All-Star Classic.						
Kivon Coman	DB	6-1	185	★★★	Florence, AL	Florence
Rated as the No. 33 prospect in Alabama by Rivals.com...Had 92 tackles, nine pass breakups and four interceptions as a senior.						
Devon Desper	OL	6-4	295	★★★	Madison, MS	Madison Central
Rated as the No. 11 prospect in Mississippi by Rivals.com...Rated as the nation's No. 11 offensive center...Participated in the Alabama-Mississippi All-Star Classic.						
Deonte Evans	ATH	5-11	198	★★★	McComb, MS	McComb
Rated as the No. 13 prospect in Mississippi by Rivals.com...Rated as the nation's No. 53 athlete...Participated in the Alabama-Mississippi All-Star Classic.						
Quay Evans	DT	6-3	295	★★★★	Morton, MS	Morton
Rivals250 selection...Rated as the No. 3 prospect in Mississippi...Rated as the nation's No. 15 defensive tackle...Had 72 tackles and five sacks as a senior.						

Name	Pos	Ht	Wt	Stars	Hometown	School
Xavier Grindle	RB	5-10	190	★★★	Columbia, MS	East Marion
Rated as the No. 14 prospect in Mississippi by Rivals.com...Rushed for 2,109 yards and 19 touchdowns as a senior.						
Dylan Holley	OL	6-3	305	★★★	Perkinston, MS	Gulf Coast C.C.
Helped lead team to 10-2 record in 2011...Chose Mississippi State over ECU, USF, UAB and others.						
Brandon Holloway	ATH	5-9	155	★★★	Tampa, FL	Alonso
Rated as the No. 48 prospect in Florida by Rivals.com...Had 907 rushing yards with 10 touchdowns and caught 19 passes for 302 yards and five TDs in 2011.						
Nick James	DT	6-5	335	★★★	Long Beach, MS	Long Beach
Rated as the No. 9 prospect in Mississippi by Rivals.com...Rated as the nation's No. 41 defensive tackle...Had 62 tackles with six tackles for loss and a sack in 2011.						
A.J. Jefferson	DE	6-4	240	★★★	Summit, MS	North Pike
Rated as the No. 6 prospect in Mississippi by Rivals.com...Rated as the nation's No. 24 strongside defensive end...Chose Mississippi State over Ole Miss, Southern Miss and others.						
Cedric Jiles	DB	6-0	180	★★★	Clinton, MS	Clinton
Rated as the No. 10 prospect in Mississippi by Rivals.com...Rated as the nation's No. 47 cornerback...Chose Mississippi State over Southern Miss.						
Adarrius Perkins	ATH	6-2	185	★★★	Brooklyn, MS	Forrest County
Rated as the No. 15 prospect in Mississippi by Rivals.com...Rated as the nation's No. 58 athlete...Participated in the Alabama-Mississippi All-Star Classic.						
Will Redmond	ATH	6-0	179	★★★★	Memphis, TN	Memphis East
Rated as the No. 8 prospect in Tennessee by Rivals.com...Rated as the nation's No. 21 athlete...Chose Mississippi State over Georgia, Tennessee, Vanderbilt and others.						
Artimas Samuel	WR	6-2	205	★★★	Columbus, GA	Carver
Rated as the No. 49 prospect in Georgia by Rivals.com...Rated as the nation's No. 69 wide receiver...Helped lead his team to state semifinals.						
Nick Schuessler	QB	6-4	190	★★	Loganville, GA	Grayson
Passed for 1,753 yards and 19 touchdowns as a senior...Chose Mississippi State over Colorado State and MTSU.						
Justin Senior	OL	6-6	280	★★★	Chatham, VA	Hargrave Military Academy
Rated as the No. 16 prep school prospect in the nation by Rivals.com...Chose Mississippi State over Memphis and others.						
Charles Siddoway	OL	6-6	300	★★★	Oroville, CA	Butte C.C.
Originally signed with Cal out of Eugene (Ore.) Sheldon High School in 2009...Chose Mississippi State over Iowa State, Pittsburgh, Texas Tech, West Virginia and others.						
Gus Walley	TE	6-4	220	★★★	Leakesville, MS	Greene County
Caught 43 passes for 566 yards and three touchdowns as a senior...Chose Mississippi State over Southern Miss, UAB and others.						
Jordan Washington	DT	6-2	260	★★★	Suwanee, GA	North Gwinnett
Had 33 tackles, 10 tackles for loss and six sacks as a senior...Chose Mississippi State over Indiana, USF, Southern Miss, Kentucky, Ole Miss and others.						

BULLDOGS SPRING ROSTER

No.	Name	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.	Hometown
48	Kasey Akins	ATH	5-8	175	Jr.	Starkville
38	Dee Arrington	DB	6-1	215	So.	Wiggins
99	Denico Autry	DL	6-5	255	Jr.	Albemarle, NC
37	James Baldwin	ATH	5-10	195	So.	Birmingham, AL
13	Johnthan Banks	DB	6-2	185	Sr.	Maben
66	Ben Beckwith	ATH	6-3	300	So.	Benton
88	William Berg	P	5-9	200	Sr.	Nashville, TN
52	Ferlando Bohanna	LB	6-0	225	So.	Memphis, TN
97	Josh Boyd	DL	6-3	300	Sr.	Philadelphia
25	Corey Broomfield	DB	5-10	180	Sr.	Palm Bay, FL
1	Chad Bumphis	WR	5-11	200	Sr.	Tupelo
37	Taveze Calhoun	DB	6-1	180	Fr.	Morton
83	Chris Cameron	ATH	5-10	180	Jr.	Palm Beach Gardens, FL
72	Winston Chapman	ATH	6-2	225	Fr.	Fairhope, AL
74	Dewayne Cherrington	ATH	6-3	335	Sr.	Gwinnett, GA
19	Arceto Clark	WR	5-10	180	Sr.	Verona
75	Blaine Clausell	OL	6-7	305	So.	Mobile, AL
72	Hunter Cunningham	ATH	6-4	300	Fr.	Maben
63	Dillon Day	OL	6-4	300	So.	West Monroe, LA
53	Brian Egan	K	5-11	210	Jr.	Prattville, AL
92	Kaleb Eulls	DL	6-4	280	So.	Yazoo City
54	Quay Evans	DL	6-3	300	Fr.	Morton
87	Devin Fosselman	WR	5-10	195	Fr.	Woodville
84	Reed Gordon	SN	6-4	220	So.	Vicksburg
31	Charles Grandfield	K	6-1	180	Sr.	Starkville
29	Nick Griffin	RB	6-0	225	So.	New Augusta
68	Templeton Hardy	OL	6-4	300	Sr.	Como
90	John Harris	DL	6-5	235	Fr.	Boynton Beach, FL
56	Corvell Harrison-Gay	DL	6-3	270	Jr.	Laurel
3	Brandon Heavens	WR	5-10	175	Sr.	Bessemer, AL
23	Sylvester Hemphill	FB	5-11	235	Sr.	Olive Branch
18	Brandon Hill	TE	6-2	235	So.	Columbus
55	Dylan Holley	OL	6-3	295	Jr.	D'Iberville
44	Christian Holmes	LB	6-1	225	So.	Puckett
12	Chris Hughes	LB	6-1	225	Jr.	Mobile, AL
30	Jay Hughes	DB	5-11	190	So.	Hattiesburg
61	Gabe Jackson	OL	6-4	320	Jr.	Liberty
45	Zachary Jackson	DB	6-1	210	Fr.	Heidelberg
80	Malcolm Johnson	WR	6-2	230	So.	Tuscaloosa, AL
81	Robert Johnson	WR	6-1	220	So.	Hattiesburg
60	Devin Jones	DL	6-1	260	Sr.	Olive Branch
93	P.J. Jones	DL	6-3	280	So.	Tupelo
65	Daniel Knox	OL	6-6	285	Fr.	Collinsville
10	Cameron Lawrence	LB	6-3	230	Sr.	Coldwater
64	Eric Lawson	OL	6-7	305	So.	Olive Branch
16	Jameon Lewis	WR	5-9	185	So.	Tylertown
24	Jamerson Love	DB	5-10	175	So.	Aberdeen
70	Justin Malone	OL	6-7	315	Fr.	Madison
35	Adrian Marcus	FB	5-10	225	Jr.	Alabaster, AL
46	Kendrick Market	DB	5-10	190	Fr.	Batesville
96	Shane McCardell	DL	6-5	260	Sr.	Beaumont, TX
57	Ethan McKee	ATH	6-0	225	So.	Meridian
50	Benardrick McKinney	LB	6-5	235	Fr.	Tunica
42	Derrick Milton	RB	6-0	205	Fr.	Pineville, LA
85	Joe Morrow	WR	6-4	205	Fr.	Ocean Springs
59	Archie Muniz	OL	6-5	290	So.	Houston, TX
34	Ivan Muniz	ATH	6-1	210	So.	Houston, TX
27	LaDarius Perkins	RB	5-10	190	Jr.	Greenville
15	Dak Prescott	QB	6-2	230	Fr.	Haughton, LA
88	McKellar Proffitt	ATH	6-3	215	So.	Columbus
79	Nick Redmond	OL	6-6	305	Fr.	Gulfport
78	Damien Robinson	OL	6-7	315	So.	Olive Branch
34	Josh Robinson	RB	5-9	215	Fr.	Franklinton, LA
17	Tyler Russell	QB	6-4	220	Jr.	Meridian
11	Ricco Sanders	WR	5-11	185	Jr.	Duncan, SC
58	Justin Senior	OL	6-5	300	Fr.	Montreal, Quebec
43	William Shumpert	FB	5-11	240	Jr.	Fulton
77	Charles Siddoway	OL	6-7	300	Jr.	Eugene, OR
51	Deontae Skinner	LB	6-2	245	Jr.	Macon
47	Darius Slay	DB	6-1	190	Sr.	Brunswick, GA
8	Chris Smith	WR	6-2	210	Sr.	Meridian
91	Preston Smith	DL	6-6	245	So.	Stone Mountain, GA
67	Tobias Smith	OL	6-3	305	Sr.	Columbus
69	Corbin Stewart	ATH	6-3	285	So.	Birminham, AL
39	Baker Swedenburg	P	6-0	185	Jr.	Columbus
73	Paul Thompson	ATH	6-3	275	So.	Madison, NJ
89	Allen Tolbert	ATH	6-0	230	Sr.	Duluth, GA
76	Joey Trapp	OL	6-4	300	Sr.	Rolling Hills, CA
98	Curtis Virges	DL	6-3	305	So.	West Point
82	Rufus Warren	TE	6-6	250	Fr.	Indianola
20	Louis Watson	DB	5-11	185	Sr.	Mobile, AL
22	Matthew Wells	DB	6-2	215	So.	Monticello
5	Nickoe Whitley	DB	6-1	205	Jr.	Jackson
31	Sam Williams	WR	6-2	200	Jr.	Brandon
32	Jonathan Young	ATH	5-8	230	Sr.	Starkville

INDIVIDUAL STATS

PASSING

Name	GP	Effic	Cmp	Att	Int	Pct	Yds	TD	Lng	Avg/G
C. Relf	11	121.5	114	190	9	60.0	1212	10	44	110.2
T. Russell	9	135.1	69	129	4	53.5	1034	8	80	114.9

RECEIVING

Name	GP	No.	Yds	Avg	TD	Lg	Avg/G
C. Smith	13	35	330	9.4	2	24	25.4
A. Clark	13	30	442	14.7	4	37	34.0
C. Bumphis	13	25	339	13.6	3	78	26.1

RUSHING

Name	GP	Att	Gain	Loss	Net	Avg	TD	Lg	Avg/G
V. Ballard	13	193	1228	39	1189	6.2	10	72	91.5
L. Perkins	13	87	452	30	422	4.9	2	40	32.5
C. Relf	11	123	497	122	375	3.0	2	27	34.1

DEF. LEADERS

Tackles: C. Lawrence 123, C. Mitchell 95, B. Wilson 94
Tackles for loss: F. Cox 14.5, D. Skinner 9, two tied with 8
Sacks: F. Cox 5. J. Boyd 4.5, two tied with 3
Interceptions: J. Banks 5, N. Whitley 4, C. Lawrence 2

NOTEBOOK

Most coaches travel the country in the offseason looking for ideas. **Dan Mullen** looked outside the SEC in the spring, studying the offenses at Oklahoma State and Oregon for ideas to improve his.

But Mullen is careful when studying those offenses. After all, he believes, they're not SEC-like offenses or teams.

"You study Oregon, then you go throw on their Auburn and LSU games and they rushed for 80 yards a game in those two games," said Mullen, stressing that the SEC's defenses are better than those found in the Pac-12.

"I can go watch them rush for 300-something yards against other teams, but 80 yards against SEC teams. So I have to see what really fits us in the future."

• Mississippi State focused on developing its two-tight end sets in the spring with sophomores **Malcolm Johnson** and **Brandon Hill**. Mullen has often spoken of his desire to involve the tight end more in his offense, but injuries hampered those plans in 2010 and 2011.

The emergence of Johnson, who caught 11 passes for 206 yards and three touchdowns last season, has reinvigorated those plans.

Johnson and Hill combined for 185 yards — more than 40 percent of the passing offense — in one spring scrimmage. The Bulldogs may even take a page out of the New England Patriots' playbook, pulling one of the tight ends into the backfield as a pass-catching running back.

"The potential is there to do it," tight ends coach **Scott Sallach** said. "I'd like to see it happen because I think they can do a lot of good things for us."

• Reserve receiver **Michael Carr** left the team for personal reasons in January. ... MSU is one of two teams in the SEC to return its entire coaching staff from last season. ... MSU's incoming defensive line class in 2012 was ranked fourth nationally by Scout.com. ... MSU has not defeated a team in the SEC West outside of Ole Miss under Mullen.

OPPOSING COACHES VIEW

• **On the state of the program:** "The talent is going down. Regardless of what people think, they've not recruited as well as (former coach) Sylvester Croom did. I think Sylvester did a better job targeting guys he could develop into SEC players to play against Alabama and LSU. He wasn't so concerned with how players were rated."

• **On season projections:** "When you start looking at talent level, I don't think you can put them in the top five or six in the league. ... When you're not good at that position (quarterback) you're not going to win a lot of games."

• **On last year:** "I think they missed (defensive coordinator) Manny Diaz (who went to Texas after the 2010 season) a little bit. I was impressed with what he did at MTSU and Mississippi State."

Corey Broomfield
Photo by RD Moore

sive tackle Josh Boyd returns after totaling 4.5 sacks, a half-sack less than Cox.

Junior college transfer Denico Autry is expected to contribute immediately at defensive end, a spot where the Bulldogs produced only four sacks last season.

Defensive coordinator Chris Wilson has harped on building depth since taking over in 2011. The cornerback spot is secure with Banks (five interceptions) and Corey Broomfield. Depth at safety is a concern, however, after Nickoe Whitley sat out the spring with an Achilles' injury.

Linebacker appears to be secure with senior Cam Lawrence (team-leading 123 tackles) on the outside reading offenses and Deontae Skinner's versatility as a backer and rusher off the edge.

The question is at middle linebacker, where Ferlando Bohanna and Benardrick McKinney battled for the starting spot in the spring. Both impressed coaches, but McKinney drew comparisons (and grabbed an interception in the spring game) to former Bulldog and NFL starter K.J. Wright.

But it's that defensive front, led by Boyd, and its depth that gives Wilson hope that MSU may very well be better defensively.

"Sure we can be," Wilson said.

"It's going to take more guys playing their role. You don't just replace Fletcher Cox with another guy. You're going to have to have five or six guys step up and play 2 percent better. If we can get five guys doing that, we'll get exponentially better."

SPECIAL TEAMS

One of Mississippi State's most successful kickers in its history is gone. Replacing Derek DePasquale, who hit 32 of 42 field-goal attempts in his career, will not be easy, especially after junior Brian Egan struggled mightily in the spring game (one blocked field goal, two missed extra points).

"We have some good guys coming in," Mullen said. "I think the competition for the kicker will really start in the fall when some guys show up on campus."

Freshman Devon Bell, an in-state recruit, likely will handle duties on kickoffs immediately and probably will as-

BEST & BRIGHTEST

MOST VALUABLE PLAYER

CB Johnthan Banks

The shutdown corner turned down the NFL to return for his senior season. ... Projected as a fourth-round prospect in the NFL Draft, Banks had a team-high five interceptions and also returned a punt for a touchdown in 2011. ... A second-team All-SEC selection in 2011. ... Overshadowed by LSU stars Tyrann Mathieu and Morris Claiborne, he was the only SEC cornerback to record 71 tackles and at least five interceptions.

EMERGING STAR

QB Tyler Russell

Shared time at quarterback last season, but will be the starter from Day 1 this season. ... He threw for 1,034 yards and eight touchdowns with four interceptions in 2011, but missed the Music City Bowl with a sprained MCL in his left knee. ... Supplanted Chris Relf as starter at halftime of the UAB game and led MSU to three second-half touchdowns for a 21-3 victory on the road.

TOP NEWCOMER

DE Denico Autry

Autry gives MSU some size (6-6, 245 pounds), speed and depth at defensive end after the Bulldogs failed to get substantial production from the spot last season. ... An NJCAA All-American at East Mississippi Community College, he won an NJCAA national title. ... Rated one of the nation's top junior college prospects. ... Recorded 11 sacks and an eye-opening 41 quarterback hurries last season at EMCC.

2009 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	25.6	72
Rushing	227.6	9
Passing	144.3	113
Total	371.9	65
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	26.8	71
Rushing	146.0	62
Passing	220.0	64
Total	366.0	58
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
- 5	- 0.42	87

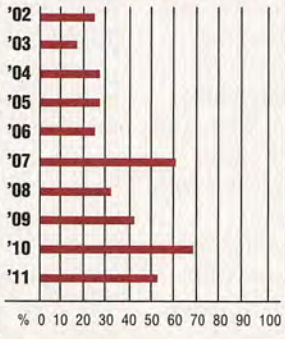
2010 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	29.0	48
Rushing	214.9	16
Passing	186.5	86
Total	401.3	42
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	19.9	21
Rushing	119.1	15
Passing	237.8	91
Total	356.9	49
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 7	+ 0.54	27

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	25.3	73
Rushing	175.3	38
Passing	181.9	94
Total	357.2	84
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	19.7	16
Rushing	153.5	61
Passing	197.2	27
Total	350.6	35
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
0	+ 0.0	59

10-YEAR WINNING TREND

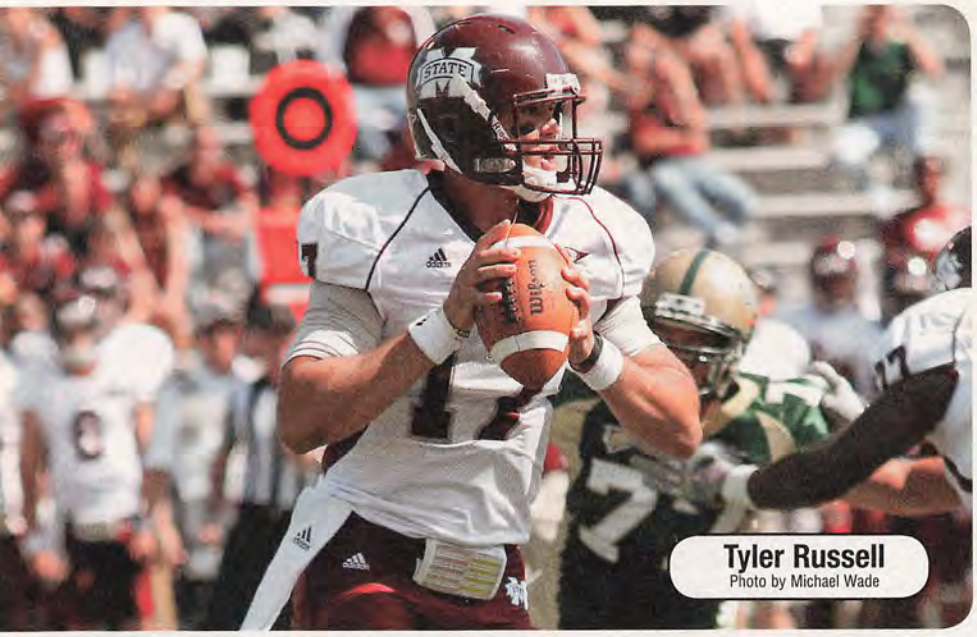


RESULTS

7-6, 2-6

W	at Memphis	59-14
L	at Auburn	34-41
L	LSU	6-19
W	LOUISIANA TECH (OT)	26-20
L	at Georgia	10-24
W	at UAB	21-3
L	SOUTH CAROLINA	12-14
W	at Kentucky	28-16
W	TENNESSEE-MARTIN	55-17
L	ALABAMA	7-24
L	at Arkansas	17-44
W	OLE MISS	31-3
	Music City Bowl	
W	vs. Wake Forest	23-17

PLAYER PROFILE



Tyler Russell
Photo by Michael Wade

Russell Ready To Be Bulldogs' Main Man

Tyler Russell knows this year is different, and he believes it's time for Mississippi State to know it as well.

The junior quarterback, primarily a backup in his first two seasons, is ready to take over the Bulldogs' reins as the starter and the face of the program. His first opportunity arrived in MSU's Maroon-White game at the end of the spring. He completed 24 of 43 passes for 312 yards and two touchdowns.

"I wanted to come out here and let the fans know that, look, Tyler Russell is for real," Russell said. "We have to let them know our offense has improved from last year and everybody is on the same page."

Russell started four games last season, though he was seemingly always on a short leash near the end of the season. A sprained MCL limited his mobility and forced him to sit out the Music City Bowl. He still managed to throw for 1,034 yards and eight touchdowns with four interceptions in nine games.

Coach Dan Mullen, who opted to take a back-and-forth approach with a two-quarterback system in the latter half of the season, did not question Russell's arm or his decision-making.

"I didn't ever doubt him," Mullen said. "We knew he could throw the football. It's the whole managing the game, the leadership and all the other things that he needed to continually grow upon."

He gained some favor from teammates when he supplanted Chris Relf as the starter during a road game at UAB. MSU was down 3-0 at halftime, when Mullen decided to insert Russell. He led the Bulldogs back for a 21-3 win.

He entered the spring as the No. 1 quarterback. Only redshirt freshman Dak Prescott has battled him for playing time, and it appears Prescott will be used only in situational formations in the red zone or if the Bulldogs need a change of pace.

"You come to a point in your career and you're like, nobody is in front of you," Russell said. "You've got to be that guy. You've got young guys behind you now. You're the guy."

Coaches noticed a change in demeanor as well. When mistakes were made on the field — even when it was not his fault — he shouldered the blame.

"Everyone believes in him," senior linebacker Cameron Lawrence said. "Whenever we're in a tough situation, he's there for us. He's the leader of our team right now."

sume placekicking responsibilities early in the season. He has a strong leg — a 55-yarder at Warren Central High in Vicksburg impresses — but consistency and accuracy will be an issue, as it is for most freshmen.

Junior Baker Swedenburg returns at punter after pinning 19 kicks inside the 20-yard line last season.

Johnthan Banks, who returned a punt for a touchdown, is one of many options (Jameon Lewis, Chad Bumphis, LaDarius Perkins) on returns.

SCHEDULE ANALYSIS

Mississippi State sure could build up some confidence — and its national profile — with this schedule.

Only one of the Bulldogs' first seven opponents reached a bowl game last season (Auburn). MSU could — perhaps, should — start the season 6-1 or 7-0. The toughest teams in those first seven weeks of the season — Auburn and Tennessee — travel to Starkville.

But that's where the fun ends and the biggest tests begin for these Bulldogs, who must face Alabama, SEC newcomer Texas A&M, LSU and Arkansas in successive weeks before traveling to Ole Miss to end the season in the ever-unpredictable Egg Bowl.

Ole Miss is the lone team in the back stretch of the schedule to not reach a bowl game last season. Alabama, LSU and Arkansas were a combined 36-4. Their only losses were to each other.

— Brandon Marcello

SCHEDULE

Date	Opponent	'11 Record
Sept. 1	JACKSON STATE	9-2
Sept. 8	AUBURN	8-5
Sept. 15	at Troy	3-9
Sept. 22	SOUTH ALABAMA	6-4
Oct. 6	at Kentucky	5-7
Oct. 13	TENNESSEE	5-7
Oct. 20	MIDDLE TENNESSEE	2-10
Oct. 27	at Alabama	12-1
Nov. 3	TEXAS A&M	7-6
Nov. 10	at LSU	13-1
Nov. 17	ARKANSAS	11-2
Nov. 24	at Ole Miss	2-10

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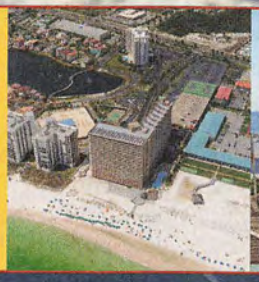

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MISSOURI TIGERS

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OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: David Yost **DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Dave Steckel** **STADIUM: Memorial Stadium/Faurot Field: 71,004**

AT A GLANCE

2011 RECORD:
8-5, 5-4 Big 12 (5th)

COACH:
Gary Pinkel: At Missouri: 85-54, 11 years; overall: 158-91-3, 21 years

RETURNING STARTERS:
12; 5 offense, 5 defense, kicker, punter

PLAYERS TO WATCH:
QB James Franklin, WR T.J. Moe, WR Marcus Lucas, WR Dorial Green-Beckham, LT Elvis Fisher, DT Sheldon Richardson, LB Andrew Wilson, CB E.J. Gaines

PRIMARY STRENGTHS:
Assuming his shoulder is healthy, Franklin gives the Tigers a dual-threat force in the backfield with loads of weapons at tailback and receiver. The O-line loses three starters but brings back four players with starting experience. The linebacker corps might be MU's best under Pinkel, and Gaines was a shutdown corner in the pass-prolific Big 12.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS:
Without injured tailback Henry Josey, can the running game still thrive against the rugged SEC defenses? The D-line is short on depth and experience at the interior positions. If Franklin needs more time for his shoulder to heal, can backup QB Corbin Berkstresser handle the job as a redshirt freshman?

KEY LOSSES:
TE Michael Egnew, RG Austin Wuebbels, LG/C Jayson Palmgren, RT Dan Hoch, DT Dominique Hamilton, SS Kenji Jackson

OVERVIEW:
The Tigers have enough playmakers on both sides of the ball to compete immediately in the SEC Eastern Division, but much will ride on Franklin's ability to stay healthy and produce as a runner and passer. The defense has played better against run-first pro-style attacks, which suits the Tigers well in the ground-and-pound SEC. Missouri is a step behind the SEC's best, but should be competitive while adjusting to new surroundings.

Mizzou Ready to Challenge SEC with Prolific Offense

The Missouri Tigers are about to embark on a college football season unlike any other, at least not since an assistant physics professor named Austin Lee McRae introduced the sport to the school in 1890.

Move ahead a century and change, and in coach Gary Pinkel's 12th year at the helm, Mizzou joins the sport's premier collection of football programs, trading the Big 12's instability and backbiting for the lucrative, but competitive, grind of the Southeastern Conference.

If nothing else, the Tigers have done their homework.

As the months led up to its inaugural season in the SEC Eastern Division, Missouri recalibrated its recruiting formula ... redesigned its uniforms and helmet ... launched plans for facility facelifts ... and initiated a marketing campaign targeting various hot spots in SEC country.

"The decisions we make are going to affect the next 30 to 40 years of football here at this university," said Pinkel, who gave the SEC move his approval once he was assured the school would invest in upgrades throughout the program. "Are we going to do the things necessary to be significantly competitive in that league? I was reassured that we would. And I'm counting on that to happen. This is our moment.

"If you're not going to invest, then stay in the Big 12," he continued. "Who knows where the Big 12's going to end up, but it's ridiculous going into this league (without investing) because you're going to get swallowed up. I've been told we're going to invest. Knowing that, let's go."

As for the product on the field, don't expect many major changes for a program that has won at least eight games in each of the past six seasons, a claim only five other teams from the major conferences can make: LSU, Oklahoma, USC, Virginia Tech and West Virginia.

Just last season, despite several significant injuries, plus the ongoing diversions of conference realignment, Mizzou rallied from a 4-5 start with a 4-0 finish and posted a winning conference record.

In a school-record seventh consecutive bowl game, the Tigers dominated most phases of an Independence Bowl victory over North Carolina.

But can Mizzou survive the SEC gauntlet with the same style of play that worked in the Big 12?

"We have our offensive and defensive schemes, and we'll do what we do there," Pinkel said. "For us, there's really no changes."

OFFENSE

Under four different quarterbacks, Missouri's attack was always among the Big 12's most prolific, including last fall when first-year starter James Franklin became a potent dual-threat weapon.

His 3,846 yards of total offense are more than any returning player in the SEC. Missouri's new league is celebrated for its punishing defenses, but the Tigers don't expect to change their stripes when it comes to slinging the ball out of four- and five-wide formations.

"We all recognize that conference is considered a real physical league," Pinkel said. "But we're still going to run our offense."

Last year, Mizzou leaned more on its ground game, running the ball on 61 percent of its offensive snaps as Franklin (981 yards, 15 touchdowns) and Henry Josey (1,168, nine touchdowns) emerged as the Big 12's most prolific quarterback-running back tandem.

Josey most likely will miss the season after suffering a catastrophic knee in-

Kendial Lawrence
Photo by John Williamson

jury last season against Texas. Franklin joined Josey on the sidelines this spring after tearing the labrum in his throwing shoulder in the team's fifth practice, requiring surgery that was expected to keep him from throwing until July.

Once Franklin returns – MU's medical staff expects him back in time for the Sept. 1 opener – he'll lead an offense that returns tailbacks Kendial Lawrence and 250-pound bruiser Jared McGriff-Culver, along with sophomore Marcus Murphy, who missed last year with a shoulder injury after he was the primary kick returner as a true freshman in 2010.

Lawrence, the starter last season before suffering a cracked fibula in September, has been the Tigers' No. 3 rusher each of the past three seasons. After Josey was lost for the season, Lawrence finished strong, running for 373 yards in the final four games.

Slot specialist T.J. Moe returns after leading the team in receptions in each of the past two seasons. He'll be flanked by deep threats Marcus Lucas and L'Damian Washington on the outside, juniors who split reps last season and averaged 18.0 and 18.2 yards per catch, respectively.

Missouri was counting on Eric Waters to replace two-time All-Big 12 tight end Michael Egnew, but Waters tore the medial collateral ligament in his left knee this spring. He's expected back for the season, but the tight end/Y position in MU's spread formations could be where heralded freshman Dorial Green-Beckham begins his career. Widely considered the nation's No. 1 recruit, the 6-6, 220-pound Springfield, Mo., native could give the offense the same kind of game-changing threat that Danario Alexander did in his All-American season in 2009.

Missouri loses three linemen who started much of the 2011 season, but returns four others with starting experience, including fourth-year starting left tackle Elvis Fisher, who was granted a sixth year of eligibility after missing all of last season with a torn patellar tendon.

Fisher eased back into his position during spring practices, allowing Justin Britt, last year's starter at left tackle, to shift to the right side.

DEFENSE

In the Big 12, Missouri usually played its best defense when it got a rare break from the waves of no-huddle spread offenses, like the Tigers' winning performances last year against pro-style schemes from Texas A&M, Texas and North Carolina.

That bodes well for the Tigers in the SEC.

"Everybody talks about (the SEC having) the smashmouth, downhill running games," middle linebacker Will Ebner said. "If you'd ask me if I like that style of play, I'd say definitely. I like

Marcus Lucas
Photo by Doug Holleman

SCOUTING REPORT: Offense

POS	STARTER	YR.	COMMENT	BACKUP/KEY DEPTH
QB	James Franklin*	Jr.	Accounted for 36 TDs in first year as starter.	Corbin Berkstresser, Fr.
RB	Kendial Lawrence	Sr.	Finished 2011 with 373 yards in last four games.	Marcus Murphy, So.
WR	T.J. Moe*	Sr.	Slot specialist eighth in team history with 148 catches.	Gahn McGaffie, Sr.
WR	Marcus Lucas	Jr.	Role expands as team's top outside threat.	Rolandis Woodland, Sr.
WR	L'Damian Washington	Jr.	Led team with 18.2 yards per reception last year.	Jimmie Hunt, So.
TE	Eric Waters	Jr.	Recovering from April surgery for torn MCL.	Dorial Green-Beckham, Fr.
LT	Elvis Fisher	Sr.	Fourth-year starter returning from 2011 injury.	Taylor Chappell, Fr.
LG	Travis Ruth*	Sr.	Made seven starts at center in 2011.	Max Copeland, Jr.
C	Mitch Morse	So.	Voted team's most improved O-lineman this spring.	Brad McNulty, Fr.
RG	Jack Meiners*	Sr.	Can play guard or tackle; started six games in 2011.	Nick Demien, So.
RT	Justin Britt*	Jr.	Shifts to RT after starting at LT all of last fall.	Chris Freeman, So.
K	Trey Barrow*	Sr.	Made 7 of 9 FGs after taking over job at midseason.	Andrew Baggett, Fr.

*Returning Starter

SCOUTING REPORT: Defense

POS	STARTER	YR.	COMMENT	BACKUP/KEY DEPTH
DE	Brad Madison*	Sr.	Played all of last season with torn labrum.	Kony Ealy, So.
DT	Sheldon Richardson	Sr.	Heralded JC transfer produced in flashes last year.	Matt Hoch, So.
NT	Lucas Vincent	So.	Line needs breakthrough year from 295-pounder.	Jimmy Burge, Sr.
DE	Michael Sam	Jr.	Clinched last year's win vs. Texas Tech with INT.	Brayden Burnett, Jr.
LB	Zaviar Gooden*	Sr.	Has 4.3 speed, but started slowly last season.	Darvin Ruise, So.
LB	Will Ebner	Sr.	Ankle injury cost him 2011 season; granted 5th year.	Donovan Bonner, Jr.
LB	Andrew Wilson*	Jr.	Led team with 98 tackles; voted MVP of bowl game.	Kentrell Brothers, Fr.
CB	E.J. Gaines*	Jr.	Earned first-team honors in pass-happy Big 12.	Robert Steeples, Sr.
CB	Kip Edwards*	Sr.	Knocked down only three passes last year.	Randy Ponder, Jr.
SS	Kenronte Walker	Sr.	Physical tackler; started final four games of 2011.	Tavon Bolden, Jr.
FS	Braylon Webb	So.	Started four games before suffering knee injury.	Matt White, Jr.
P	Trey Barrow*	Sr.	Second-team All-Big 12, averaged 44.8 yards a punt.	Christian Brinser, So.

*Returning Starter

TIGERS RECRUITING 2012

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3 NEWCOMERS OF IMPACT

Dorial Green-Beckham
At this point, what more can be said about Green-Beckham than has already been written. He was the country's No. 1 recruit for a reason. He's tall; he's well-built; he's incredibly fast and he's freakishly athletic. For the Tigers, this was the mother of all signees, and someone who will bring great attention to the program.

Maty Mauk
One thing we know about Mauk is this: He understands the passing game. Mauk finished his storied high school career as the all-time national record holder for passing yards. That's quite a feat. In each of his final two seasons, he threw for more than 5,000 yards and nearly 70 touchdown passes.

Evan Boehm
An Under Armour All-American, Boehm was the top interior signee in the Missouri class. He has the prototypical offensive guard build and should fit in nicely at that position with a little seasoning. One thing about Boehm that stands out is his toughness and durability. He's a rugged, physical player who should do well in the SEC.

THE SLEEPER

Sean Culkin
Culkin comes from a small school in Florida, but has a lot of ability. The 6-5, 226-pounder does many things well. This is a big, physical kid who can thrive both as an in-line blocker and in the passing game. Because he didn't play against great competition in high school, there could be a period of adjustment.

Committments	19
Average Stars	3.11
★★★★★	1
★★★★☆	1
★★★☆☆	16
★★☆☆☆	1
Total Stars	59
National Rank: 31	SEC: 11

2013 NEEDS: Defensive tackle. Defensive tackle. And defensive tackle. Right now, Missouri has only four guys on scholarship at that spot and it is looking to build some serious depth there as it enters the SEC. At that position, the Tigers haven't had a lot of great players in the recent past, so not only are they looking for numbers, but more top-level talent as well. The offensive line is another area of need. Two inside guys will be graduating after the 2012 season, so finding bodies there is crucial, too.

By Brian Perroni/Rivals.com

Name	Pos	Ht	Wt	Stars	Hometown	School
Evan Boehm	OL	6-3	290	★★★★	Lee's Summit, MO	Lee's Summit West
Rivals250 selection...Rated as the No. 4 prospect in Missouri...Rated as the nation's No. 7 offensive guard... Participated in the Under Armour All-American Game...Chose Missouri over Auburn, Michigan, Iowa, Nebraska and others.						
Torey Boozer	DB	6-3	210	★★★	Everman, TX	Everman
Rated as the nation's No. 46 safety by Rivals.com...Chose Missouri over offers from Arizona, Baylor, Houston, North Texas and SMU.						
Harold Brantley	DT	6-2	260	★★	Hershey, PA	Hershey
Switched his commitment from Syracuse to Missouri before National Signing Day after landing a late offer from the Tigers...Had more than 40 tackles on defense and rushed for more than 700 yards at fullback as a senior...Also played basketball.						
Levi Copelin	DB	6-2	170	★★★	Broken Arrow, OK	Broken Arrow
Rated as the No. 8 prospect in Oklahoma by Rivals.com...Rated as the nation's No. 52 safety...Chose Missouri over Houston and Iowa State.						
Chaston Cuffee	DB	6-1	185	★★★	Cleburne, TX	Cleburne
Rated as the nation's No. 54 safety by Rivals.com...Chose Missouri over Oklahoma State and North Texas...Played quarterback in high school.						
Sean Culkin	TE	6-5	226	★★★	Largo, FL	Indian Rocks Christian School
Rated as the No. 62 prospect in Florida by Rivals.com...Rated as the nation's No. 24 tight end.						
John Gibson	DB	5-10	172	★★★	Missouri City, TX	Fort Bend Marshall
Formerly committed to Arkansas, Gibson also had offers and interest from Indiana, Louisiana Tech, Minnesota, San Diego State, Vanderbilt, Western Kentucky and Wyoming.						
Markus Golden	LB	6-3	230	★★★	Hutchinson, KS	Hutchinson C.C.
Redshirted in 2011, giving him three years of eligibility at Missouri...Recorded 66 tackles, six tackles for loss and two interceptions in 2010.						
Dorial Green-Beckham	WR	6-6	220	★★★★★	Springfield, MO	Hillcrest
Rated as the No. 1 prospect in the nation by Rivals.com and the top wide receiver and top player in Missouri...Broke national career receiving records in high school and caught 119 passes for 2,233 yards and 24 touchdowns as a senior...Participated in the U.S. Army All-American Bowl and earned co-MVP honors after catching the longest TD pass in the history of the game.						

Name	Pos	Ht	Wt	Stars	Hometown	School
Russell Hansbrough	RB	5-8	173	★★★	Arlington, TX	Bowie
Switched his commitment from Arizona State and chose the Tigers over offers from Auburn, Texas Tech and others...Rushed for 1,238 yards and 18 touchdowns as a senior.						
Rickey Hatley	DE	6-4	245	★★★	Atlanta, TX	Atlanta
Earned first-team all-district and all-area honors as a senior...Three-sport standout also participated in basketball and track.						
Brandon Holifield	TE	6-5	210	★★★	Tallahassee, FL	Godby
Late addition to Missouri class after backing off original commitment to Miami... Became the fourth Godby prospect to sign with an SEC school in the 2012 class, joining T.J. Davis (Auburn), Kadeem Thomas (Kentucky) and Jakarri Thomas (Vanderbilt).						
Maty Mauk	QB	6-2	185	★★★	Kenton, OH	Kenton
Rated as the No. 35 prospect in Ohio by Rivals.com...Rated as the nation's No. 20 pro-style quarterback...Set national career passing records during another big season as a senior that saw him pass for 5,413 yards and 68 touchdowns, while rushing for 1,768 yards and 24 scores...Participated in the Offense-Defense All-American Bowl.						
Donavin Newsom	LB	6-2	220	★★★	St. Louis, MO	Parkway North
Rated as the No. 7 prospect in Missouri by Rivals.com...Rated as the nation's No. 25 inside linebacker.						
Michael Scherer	LB	6-4	229	★★★	St. Louis, MO	Mary Inst Country Day
Rated as the No. 8 prospect in Missouri by Rivals.com...Rated as the nation's No. 56 outside linebacker...Rushed for 1,120 yards and 13 touchdowns, while racking up 83 tackles and four sacks on defense as a junior.						
Morgan Steward	RB	5-11	182	★★★	Kansas City, MO	Staley
Rated as the No. 6 prospect in Missouri by Rivals.com...Rated as the nation's No. 28 running back...Rushed for 2,226 yards and 27 touchdowns as a senior.						
Ka'Ra Stewart	DB	6-0	190	★★★	O'Fallon, IL	O'Fallon
Rated as the No. 26 prospect in Illinois by Rivals.com...Rated as the nation's No. 49 safety...Chose Missouri over Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Northwestern and Purdue.						
Jordan Williams	OL	6-4	250	★★★	Denton, TX	Ryan
Chose Missouri over Arizona, Arizona State, Arkansas State, Boise State, Colorado, Oregon State, SMU, Stanford, UCLA and Virginia.						
Evan Winston	DE	6-4	240	★★★	Muskegon Heights, MI	Muskegon Heights
Rated as the No. 18 prospect in Michigan by Rivals.com...Recorded 93 tackles and 11 sacks as a junior.						

TIGERS SPRING ROSTER

No.	Name	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.	Hometown
79	Logan Adkison	OL	6-3	230	Fr.	Blue Springs
43	Justin Alderton	LB	5-11	205	Fr.	Kahoka
99	Andrew Baggett	PK	6-2	215	Fr.	Lee's Summit
97	Trey Barrow	P/PK	6-1	205	Sr.	Moberly
13	Corbin Berkstresser	QB	6-3	225	Fr.	Lee's Summit
67	Michael Boddie	OL	6-5	285	Fr.	Gilmer, TX
10	Tavon Bolden	S	6-1	205	Jr.	Houston, TX
8	Donovan Bonner	LB	6-1	240	Jr.	Dallas, TX
54	Michael Brennan	LB	6-2	225	So.	Kahoka
92	Christian Brinser	P	6-1	185	So.	Liberty
68	Justin Britt	OL	6-6	300	Jr.	Lebanon
38	Kentrell Brothers	LB	6-1	230	Fr.	Guthrie, OK
5	Cortland Browning	S	6-1	210	Fr.	Tyler, TX
91	Jimmy Burge	DL	6-2	285	Sr.	Houston, TX
55	Brayden Burnett	DL	6-2	240	Jr.	Southlake, TX
95	David Butler	DL	6-4	270	Jr.	Kansas City
51	Stephen Carberry	OL	6-4	295	So.	Belleville, IL
41	Daniel Carpenter	TB	5-11	225	Jr.	Hardin
29	Mark Carpenter	LB	6-0	225	Fr.	Hardin
43	Cameron Chancey	WR	6-0	180	Fr.	Branson
62	Taylor Chappell	OL	6-5	290	Fr.	Canadian, TX
14	Jaleel Clark	WR	6-4	220	Jr.	Allentown, PA
48	Brandon Colbert	TE	6-3	225	So.	Troy
61	Max Copeland	OL	6-3	290	Jr.	Billings, MT
45	Tyler Davis	DB	6-1	200	Jr.	Eldon
46	Kevie Defranc	DB	5-9	170	Fr.	Boynton Beach, FL
17	Alex Demczak	QB	6-0	195	So.	Springfield, IL
78	Nick Demien	OL	6-6	295	So.	Wentzville
84	Stephen Drain	TE	6-3	250	Sr.	Crystal Lake, IL
39	Brandon Durant	LB	6-0	220	Fr.	Copperas Cove, TX
47	Kony Ealy	DL	6-5	260	So.	New Madrid
4	Daniel Easterly	S	6-4	195	So.	Detroit, MI
32	Will Ebner	LB	6-0	230	Sr.	Friendswood, TX
98	Clayton Echard	DL	6-5	245	Fr.	Eureka
1	Kip Edwards	DB	6-0	200	Sr.	Arlington, TX
72	Elvis Fisher	OL	6-5	295	Sr.	St. Petersburg, FL
94	Marvin Foster	DL	6-1	295	Jr.	Fort Worth, TX
1	James Franklin	QB	6-2	225	Jr.	Corinth, TX
74	Chris Freeman	OL	6-8	325	So.	Trotwood, OH
31	E.J. Gaines	DB	5-10	190	Jr.	Independence
70	Anthony Gatti	OL	6-6	295	So.	St. Louis
17	Sheldon Gerau	WR	6-0	200	Fr.	Columbia
16	Ashton Glaser	QB	6-0	205	Jr.	Springdale, AR
18	Michael Godas	S	6-0	190	Fr.	Columbia
25	Zaviar Gooden	LB	6-2	230	Sr.	Pflugerville, TX
40	Clarence Green	LB	6-0	220	Fr.	Clute, TX
69	Mitch Hall	OL	6-1	275	Fr.	Burnsville, MN
73	Mark Hill	OL	6-6	290	Jr.	Branson
89	Matt Hoch	DL	6-5	290	So.	Harlan, IA
88	Jimmie Hunt	WR	6-0	215	So.	Cahokia, IL
35	Tyler Hunt	TB	5-11	205	So.	Westran
19	David Johnson	DB	5-11	190	Fr.	Spring, TX
20	Henry Josey	TB	5-10	190	Jr.	Angleton, TX
4	Kendial Lawrence	TB	5-9	195	Sr.	Rockwall, TX
18	Wesley Leftwich	WR	6-1	200	Fr.	Columbia
64	Keric Lickerman	DL	6-3	240	So.	Wildwood
85	Marcus Lucas	WR	6-5	215	Jr.	Liberty
56	Robert Luce	OL	6-2	285	So.	Dallas, TX
50	Steven Mack	OL	6-0	245	So.	Chicago, IL
57	Brad Madison	DL	6-4	260	Sr.	Bethany
50	Denzel Martin	LB	5-10	230	Jr.	Ladue
3	Gahn McGaffie	WR	5-10	190	Sr.	Galena Park, TX
60	Connor McGovern	DL	6-4	295	Fr.	Fargo, ND
38	Jared McGriff-Culver	TB	5-11	250	Sr.	Downers Grove, IL
63	Brad McNulty	OL	6-4	295	Fr.	Allen, TX
75	Jack Meiners	OL	6-6	310	Sr.	St. Louis
28	T.J. Moe	WR	6-0	200	Sr.	O'Fallon
65	Mitch Morse	OL	6-5	295	So.	Austin, TX
6	Marcus Murphy	TB	5-9	185	So.	DeSoto, TX
91	Blake Owens	PK	5-11	200	So.	Kansas City
36	Jared Parham	LB	6-2	230	So.	Coppell, TX
28	Ernest Payton	DB	6-2	210	Fr.	College Station, TX
46	Kyle Peasel	TE	6-3	210	Jr.	Troy
22	Joe Plevel	WR	6-2	210	Sr.	St. Louis
7	Randy Ponder	DB	5-10	195	Jr.	Edmond, OK
56	Shane Ray	DL	6-3	245	Fr.	Shawnee Mission, KS
34	Sheldon Richardson	DL	6-4	295	Sr.	St. Louis
12	Darvin Ruise	LB	6-1	240	So.	Glen St. Mary, FL
53	Travis Ruth	OL	6-2	295	Sr.	Jefferson City
52	Michael Sam	DL	6-3	260	Jr.	Hitchcock, TX
21	Bud Sasser	TE	6-2	220	So.	Denton, TX
21	Ian Simon	S	5-11	190	Fr.	Mansfield, TX
26	Xavier Smith	DB	5-11	185	So.	Edmond, OK
92	Nathan Sprunk	DL	6-2	215	So.	Omaha, NE
59	Kyle Starke	OL	6-4	295	Fr.	Liberty
22	Robert Steeples	DB	6-1	195	Sr.	St. Louis
9	Kerwin Stricker	WR	6-1	215	Jr.	Washington
85	Derrion Thomas	DL	6-2	225	So.	Lee's Summit
96	Lucas Vincent	DL	6-2	295	So.	Olathe, KS
33	Jordan Wade	TB	5-10	190	So.	Lee's Summit
30	Kenronte Walker	S	6-0	210	Sr.	Fayetteville, NC
2	L'Damian Washington	WR	6-4	195	Jr.	Shreveport, LA
81	Eric Waters	TE	6-4	240	Jr.	Mansfield, TX
9	Braylon Webb	S	6-0	210	So.	Gilmer, TX
7	Kortland Webb	WR	5-10	175	Fr.	St. Louis
8	Darius White	WR	6-3	205	Jr.	Fort Worth, TX
99	George White	DL	6-3	290	Sr.	Flint, MI
24	Greg White	TB	6-1	215	So.	DeQueen, AR
17	Matt White	S	6-0	195	Jr.	Keller, TX
48	Andrew Wilson	LB	6-3	235	Jr.	Peculiar
5	Rolandis Woodland	WR	6-3	200	Sr.	St. Louis

INDIVIDUAL STATS

PASSING

	GP	Effic	Cmp	Att	Int	Pct	Yards	TD	Long	Avg/G
J. Franklin	13	139.88	238	376	11	63.3	2865	21	53	220.4
J. Costello	5	312.90	3	4	0	75.0	74	1	54	14.8

RECEIVING

	GP	No.	Yards	Avg	TD	Long	Avg/G
T.J. Moe	13	54	649	12.0	4	40	49.9
M. Egnew	13	50	523	10.5	3	39	40.2
W. Kemp	13	29	369	12.7	5	40	28.4

RUSHING

	GP	Att.	Gain	Loss	Net	Avg	TD	Long	Avg/G
H. Josey	10	145	1191	23	1168	8.1	9	68	116.8
J. Franklin	13	217	1145	164	981	4.5	15	31	75.5
K. Lawrence	10	119	630	64	566	4.8	5	35	56.6

DEF. LEADERS

Tackles: A. Wilson 98, L. Lambert 82, Z. Gooden 80
Tackles for loss: L. Lambert 11.5, A. Wilson 9.5, J. Smith 9
Sacks: J. Smith 5, B. Madison 4.5, D. Hamilton 3
Interceptions: K. Jackson 3, Z. Gooden 2, E.J. Gaines 2

NOTEBOOK

For just the second time in 12 seasons at Missouri, **Gary Pinkel** hired an assistant coach from outside of his staff when he brought in **Alex Grinch** to coach safeties.

Grinch, a former MU grad assistant and Pinkel's nephew, had coached the secondary at Wyoming for the past three seasons. Grinch replaced Barry Odom, a former MU linebacker who left to become defensive coordinator at Memphis. Grinch was assigned to recruit Atlanta, a newly targeted area for Missouri in the SEC.

• When spring practices ended in April, Missouri already had nine commitments for 2013, including eight from in-state players. The Tigers secured commitments from most of the state's top prospects, led by Fort Zumwalt South running back **Chase Abbington**, Staley quarterback **Trent Hosick** and Lee's Summit West linebacker **Nick Ramirez**.

• April's Black and Gold Game included the highly anticipated unveiling of Mizzou's new Nike uniforms and redesigned helmets.

MU now has three jersey choices (black, white, gold), four pants (black, white, gold, anthracite) and two helmets, both black and both featuring the Tiger head logo, not the block M that adorned Mizzou's helmets since 1971.

MU usually will wear black jerseys with gold pants for home games.

Faurot Field is also getting a facelift, including a new artificial turf surface, plus new SEC emblems and a larger Tiger head logo at midfield. The outline around the field will change from white to the school's new universal shade of gold that Nike is using for all of Mizzou's teams.

• Nine players expected to be on the two-deep sat out Missouri's final spring scrimmage while recovering from offseason surgeries: offensive linemen **Elvis Fisher**, **Anthony Gatti**, **Mark Hill** and **Connor McGovern**; quarterback **James Franklin**; tight end **Eric Waters**; and defensive linemen **Marvin Foster**, **Brad Madison** and **Sheldon Richardson**. Pinkel expected them all back for the season.

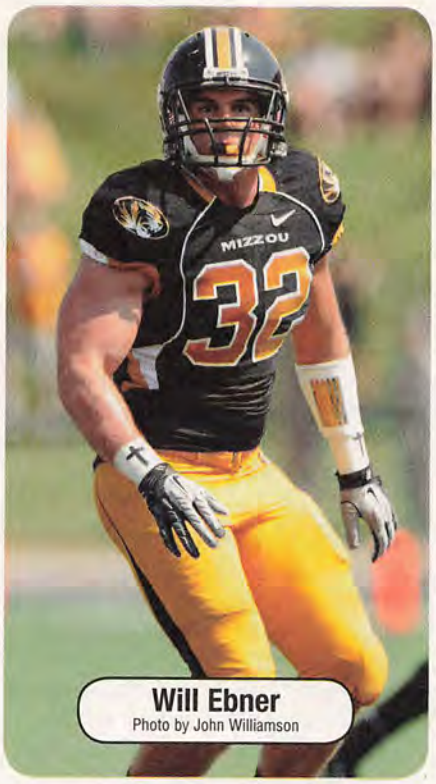
The one injured player who likely won't return this year is tailback **Henry Josey**, who as of mid-April was waiting to undergo a second surgery on the knee he mangled last fall against Texas.

OPPOSING COACHES VIEW

• **On whether Missouri's spread-option offense will work in the SEC:** "Sure it will. It will work in seven of the 12 games. In the other five, the Tigers' offense will put so much pressure on their defense it will get ugly, or they'll struggle to win. It (the spread) won't work every Saturday in that league because the SEC will pound you into submission. It will not work against the better defenses in the SEC more times than not."

• **On Missouri's transition to the SEC:** "They have played very well in the Big 12 over the last several years. But the Big 12 ain't the SEC. They just became an expansion team."

• **On QB James Franklin:** "He is really dangerous in terms of he can run it and throw well enough to beat you. He's a little like the guy (Denard Robinson) at Michigan, but not quite that good."



Will Ebner
Photo by John Williamson

physical games."

The Tigers are grateful to have Ebner filling those holes again. The senior was granted a fifth year of eligibility after suffering a season-ending ankle injury in last year's opener. He joins a loaded corps that includes speedy Zaviar Gooden on the weak side and Andrew Wilson on the strong side.

Depth should be a concern along the line, where the Tigers are especially short on experienced defensive tackles.

Sheldon Richardson, the former ballyhooed junior college transfer, is the most seasoned of the bunch but missed all of spring practices recovering from shoulder surgery. He'll line up alongside former reserve Lucas Vincent or converted tight end/defensive end Matt Hoch, the revelation of the offseason.

Hoch was voted the team's most improved defensive lineman of the spring after beefing up to 290 pounds and earning a starting job in Richardson's absence.

Defensive end is again one of MU's deepest positions, with former All-Big 12 pass-rusher Brad Madison back on one side – he played all of 2011 with a torn labrum – and a couple of former backups, Michael Sam and Kony Ealy, vying for the other job. Redshirt freshman Shane Ray, perhaps the most explosive of the group, could be an effective third-down pass-rush specialist. Returning first-team All-Big 12 cornerback E.J. Gaines set a single-season school record with 18 passes defended last year. He again teams with veteran cornerback Kip Edwards.

At safety, Kenronte Walker and Braylon Webb each started four games last year and begin the season as favorites to lock down starting jobs. The most compelling candidate for playing time is junior Tavon Bolden.

Once compared to former All-Big 12 safety William Moore, now a starter for the Atlanta Falcons, Bolden was kicked off the team last season for academic reasons but was allowed to return once he met certain provisions.

He climbed the depth chart during spring practices and earned a starting job in the nickel package.

"What's the ceiling on a guy like that? I'm not sure yet," safeties coach Alex Grinch said. "But certainly I don't think we're anywhere close to reaching it."

SPECIAL TEAMS

Punter Trey Barrow, who earned second-team All-Big 12 honors, took over the kicking duties at midseason last year when former All-American Grant Ressel's struggles were compounded by

BEST & BRIGHTEST

MOST VALUABLE PLAYER

QB James Franklin

Threw for 2,865 yards and ran for 981 last season, adding up to more total yards than any returning player in the SEC. ... A powerful runner with good size (6-2, 225), he fluidly runs the zone-read option. ... Doesn't have blazing speed, but broke off 40 runs of 10 yards or more last season. ... Especially effective in the clutch, posting a 161.1 passing efficiency rating in the fourth quarter, his best rating split for any quarter.

EMERGING STAR

CB E.J. Gaines

As a first-year starter, had the best season by a Mizzou cornerback under Gary Pinkel. First MU corner to earn first-team all-conference honors since Adrian Jones in 1989. ... Defended a school-record 18 passes (two interceptions, 16 break-ups). ... Also a physical tackler, ranked fifth on team with 69 stops. ... Earned Big 12 Defensive Player of the Week honor for performance against Texas A&M: 10 tackles and four break-ups, while limiting star wideout Jeff Fuller.

TOP NEWCOMER

WR Dorial Green-Beckham

Widely ranked nation's No. 1 player in 2012 recruiting class. ... Chose Mizzou over Arkansas, Alabama, Oklahoma and Texas on nationally televised signing day ceremony at Hillcrest High School in Springfield, Mo. ... Set national prep records for receiving yards (6,353) and TD catches (75). ... Named 2011 National Player of the Year by *Sports Illustrated*, *USA Today* and *Parade* magazine.

2009 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	29.0	49
Rushing	127.0	85
Passing	285.5	14
Total	412.5	32
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	25.4	59
Rushing	118.6	26
Passing	251.5	104
Total	370.1	64
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 4	+ 0.31	36

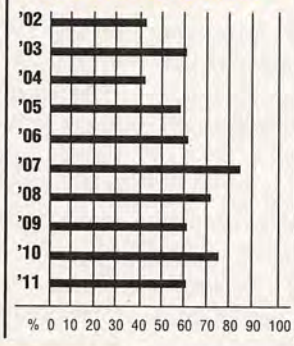
2010 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	29.9	43
Rushing	156.4	57
Passing	253.2	33
Total	409.6	35
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	16.1	6
Rushing	152.9	62
Passing	203.5	37
Total	356.4	47
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 11	+ 0.85	15

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	32.9	30
Rushing	244.0	9
Passing	231.5	64
Total	475.5	12
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	23.5	44
Rushing	127.4	29
Passing	252.6	94
Total	380.0	61
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 3	+ 0.23	40

10-YEAR WINNING TREND

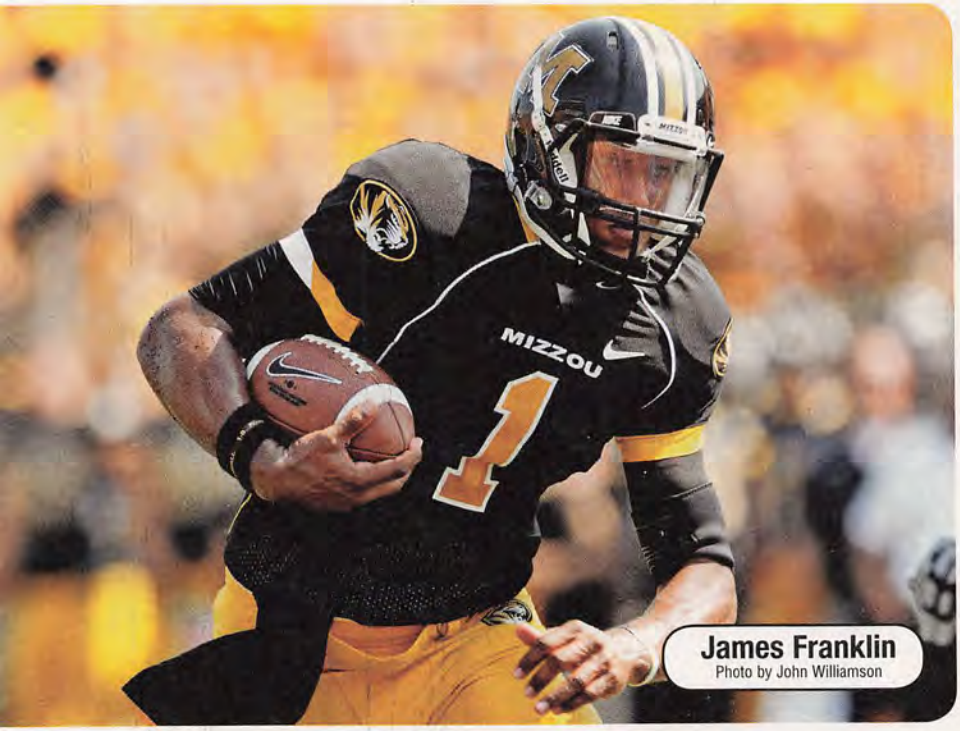


RESULTS

8-5, 5-4

W	Miami (OH)	17-6
L	at Arizona State (OT)	30-37
W	Western Illinois	69-0
L	at Oklahoma	28-38
L	at Kansas State	17-24
W	Iowa State	52-17
L	Oklahoma State	24-45
W	at Texas A&M (OT)	38-31
L	at Baylor	39-42
W	Texas	17-5
W	Texas Tech	31-27
W	at Kansas	24-10
	Independence Bowl	
W	vs. North Carolina	41-24

PLAYER PROFILE



James Franklin
Photo by John Williamson

Franklin Earned His Tiger Stripes in 2011

A friendlier, more well-mannered player has probably never pulled on a Missouri jersey, but the Tigers quickly learned last year that quarterback James Franklin isn't Mr. Rogers all the time.

In a Week 2 game at Arizona State, Franklin lugged the ball 27 times, taking shot after shot from the Sun Devils' aggressive defense. He dropped back to pass 42 times. The Tigers lost in overtime but discovered their new fearless leader.

A month later at Texas A&M, after the Tigers lost three of four games, Franklin's statement-making 20-yard touchdown scramble on the game's opening possession — he took out four defenders, including a 260-pound linebacker — left teammates in awe.

It wasn't a perfect season for the first-year starter, but no one will ever question the toughness that hid behind Franklin's cheery demeanor.

But will the unforgiving defenses in the SEC rattle the junior quarterback?

He'll have to get back on the field first. Franklin suffered a torn labrum in his throwing shoulder March 13 while trying to retrieve his own fumble near the goal line during a live practice drill. He underwent surgery 10 days later and missed the rest of spring practices.

The team's medical staff expects him back for the start of the season.

"He's a pretty special guy," Gary Pinkel said. "He'll heal quick. He works tremendously hard in that training room. ... And so much of it is having a great attitude."

Said Franklin after the team's Black and Gold Game on April 14: "I want to be out there. I want to be getting better, because I know I had a lot I wanted to work on from last season going into this year."

Franklin, who completed 63.3 percent of his passes, surpassed the coaches' expectations as a downfield thrower, completing twice as many 30-yard passes (20) than first-round NFL draft pick Blaine Gabbert completed in 2010 (10).

Franklin watched as backup Corbin Berkstresser ran the No. 1 offense for most of the spring and was expected to do the same during the team's voluntary passing sessions throughout June.

But offensive coordinator David Yost didn't expect Franklin's layoff to set him back heading into the fall. His knowledge of the Tigers' spread offense and recognition of defenses has improved significantly since the start of last season, Yost said.

"He's very advanced now, and he sees it all," Yost said. "He can still grow and become a better quarterback after going through this."

a season-ending hip injury.

After making 7 of 9 field-goal attempts in his relief role, Barrow went through accuracy struggles this spring. He'll be pushed in preseason camp by walk-ons Andrew Baggett and Nick Coffman, an incoming freshman.

Part of the spring problems might have been the departure of trusty snapper Beau Brinkley, who never had a bad snap in more than 500 tries in four years.

Slot receiver T.J. Moe is back to handle punt returns, but the Tigers will look at several candidates to handle kickoff returns, including receiver Jimmie Hunt and tailback Marcus Murphy.

SCHEDULE ANALYSIS

Mizzou gets to measure itself against the SEC East favorites in a hurry: The Tigers play host to Georgia on Sept. 8 and head to South Carolina two weeks later. MU is fortunate to host defending national champion Alabama, but November could be tricky with road trips to Florida, Tennessee and Texas A&M, where Mizzou has won three straight.

For the Tigers to stay afloat in the division, they'll have to win home games against Vanderbilt and Kentucky.

After a season-opening visit from Southeastern Louisiana, Mizzou better be careful with nonconference games scattered on the schedule: a Sept. 15 visit from Arizona State, a Sept. 29 trip to Central Florida and a Nov. 17 visit from Syracuse.

— Dave Matter

SCHEDULE

Date	Opponent	'11 Record
Sept. 1	S.E. LOUISIANA	3-8
Sept. 8	GEORGIA	10-4
Sept. 15	ARIZONA STATE	6-7
Sept. 22	at South Carolina	11-2
Sept. 29	at UCF	5-7
Oct. 6	VANDERBILT	6-7
Oct. 13	ALABAMA	12-1
Oct. 27	KENTUCKY	5-7
Nov. 3	at Florida	7-6
Nov. 10	at Tennessee	5-7
Nov. 17	SYRACUSE	5-7
Nov. 24	at Texas A&M	7-6

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SOUTH CAROLINA GAMECOCKS

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OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Steve Spurrier | **DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Lorenzo Ward** | **STADIUM: Williams-Brice Stadium: 80,250**

AT A GLANCE

2011:
11-2, 6-2 SEC (2nd, East)

COACH:
Steve Spurrier — At South Carolina: 55-35, 7 years; overall: 197-75-2, 22 years

RETURNING STARTERS:
13; 7 offense, 6 defense

PLAYERS TO WATCH:
QB Connor Shaw, RB Marcus Lattimore, WR Ace Sanders, DE Devin Taylor, DE Jadeveon Clowney, DT Kelcy Quarles, LB Shaq Wilson, FS D.J. Swearinger

PRIMARY STRENGTHS:
The defensive line was one of the nation's best last year and may not have much of a drop-off this season behind Clowney and Taylor, despite losing NFL talents Melvin Ingram and Travian Robertson. When healthy, Marcus Lattimore gives the Gamecocks a balanced offense and opens up the playbook for Steve Spurrier.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS:
Cornerback Stephon Gilmore's decision to leave early for the NFL left the secondary inexperienced. The offensive line lost three solid veterans, and while there are plenty of bodies, there's just one senior returning. If Lattimore doesn't come back 100 percent, it could put a lot of early pressure on the passing game.

KEY LOSSES:
WR Alshon Jeffery, OG Rokevious Watkins, DT Travian Robertson, DE Melvin Ingram, CB Stephon Gilmore

OVERVIEW:
This South Carolina team could be better than last year's squad, which won 11 games. The defense has plenty of talent, and if the offense doesn't stall and looks more like the 2010 version, the Gamecocks might just make it through a tough schedule and make their second trip to the SEC Championship Game. The winner of that game has played in the BCS Championship Game the last six seasons.

SEC Title Within Reach for Loaded Gamecocks

When Steve Spurrier took the South Carolina coaching position before the 2005 season, people told him he was crazy.

Winning at a school that had just one conference championship (an ACC title) in more than 100 years of football naturally brings out the skeptics. To Spurrier, it was simply a challenge.

He took great pride in winning a school-record 11 games in 2011 and has gone 8-0 the past two years against Georgia, Florida, Tennessee and Clemson.

A season removed from the most successful in Gamecock history, Spurrier and his players are now trying to figure out what's next.

"Our goals will probably be very similar to last year. Total wins will go up a bit because we've already done 11," Spurrier said. "We don't want to be too stupid and just have one goal of winning 12, but who knows if we're capable of that? Possibly."

South Carolina capped Spurrier's best year in Columbia with a 30-13 Capital One Bowl victory over Nebraska to end a three-game postseason losing streak.

The Gamecocks completed that run without Marcus Lattimore, their All-SEC running back who blew out his knee in the seventh game of the season.

Stephen Garcia wasn't around either. The troubled quarterback, who had been suspended five times, was finally dismissed from the program in early October for failing an alcohol test.

Overcoming that adversity and finding new leadership in quarterback Connor Shaw has reinvigorated the 67-year-old Spurrier, who's still searching for his first SEC championship with the Gamecocks.

"I think it's a team that's got a chance to be pretty good," he said. "We're going to try our best not to get embarrassed, try to play the game the way it's supposed to be played. We do have a lot of good players though."

That list of 13 returning starters includes Shaw, Lattimore and defensive ends Devin Taylor and Jadeveon Clowney.

"We've got a great team," Lattimore said. "Our defense could be just like last year, just relentless. Our offense looks great; Connor looks awesome. We've just got a lot of talent, and we're going to put it all together this year."

That doesn't mean the Gamecocks don't have some holes and impact players to replace.

"We're still a wait-and-see bunch," Spurrier said.

"(Receiver) Alshon (Jeffery's) gone, so there's a bunch of yards there. (Defensive end) Melvin (Ingram's) gone, so there's a bunch of sacks, special teams scores, defensive scores. (Spur safety) Antonio Allen is gone. Somebody has got to step forward.

"We'll find out when we play Vandy, first game on Thursday night. That's when we'll find out what kind of ball team we've got."

OFFENSE

Marcus Lattimore has every intention of returning to full speed this season. He stayed ahead of his rehab schedule all offseason, and the coaching staff believes he'll be as good as ever, if not better.

That's bad news for the rest of the SEC. Lattimore led the league with 818 rushing yards before going down seven games into last season. His brutal, hard-nosed running style punishes defenses, especially late in games, but it also affects his overall health. He said his only goal for 2012 is to stay on the field

Marcus Lattimore
Photo by Daniel Shirey-US PRESSWIRE

without injury.

"I honestly wasn't doing everything to keep in the shape I was supposed to be in," said Lattimore, who had 10 touchdowns last year. "I wasn't getting in the hot tub and cold tub like I was supposed to. I wasn't stretching like I was supposed to.

"I just wasn't doing the little things, and I'll never take my legs for granted again."

There's talent and experience behind Lattimore, should he not start at 100 percent. Senior Kenny Miles has proven more than capable to spell anyone, while Brandon Wilds had 486 yards rushing in five starts as a freshman.

Connor Shaw also has a pretty good set of wheels and gives defenses fits with his ability to run the read option. He got better every game in 2011, even when the box score didn't show it, and put it all together in the bowl game.

He worked in the offseason on getting rid of the ball quicker, which could cut down on some of his rushing yards, but he's got a good enough arm, Spurrier said, to make any throw necessary.

However, who will he throw to? While Jeffery's numbers tailed off last season, as the Gamecocks became even more of a running team behind Shaw, somebody's got to step up and make plays in the passing game, which Spurrier criticized at times during the spring.

Junior Ace Sanders has the best chance at being that standout guy. He plays in the slot, but his speed and above average quickness make him a matchup nightmare. Sophomore Damiere Byrd has track speed, but has work to do catching the ball, while senior D.L. Moore could be the guy to emerge as a threat at 6-5. Shaq Roland, the best recruit in South Carolina and one of the top receivers in the nation, will also be on board.

"We lost a good one in Alshon," Shaw said, "but I think players naturally step up and I think we had some guys step up."

It will help Shaw to have two solid tight ends to go to. Justice Cunningham is a fine blocker who provides a big target in the middle of the field, while Rory Anderson showed big-play ability as a freshman last year.

The line is anchored by senior center and four-year starter T.J. Johnson and there are plenty of big bodies vying for spots, including 6-6, 331-pound redshirt freshman Brandon Shell at left tackle.

DEFENSE

Coordinator Lorenzo Ward, who has been on staff for four seasons, takes over for Ellis Johnson, who was considered one of the top defensive coaches in the SEC until he left to become the head coach at Southern Mississippi in the offseason.

The Gamecocks ranked third nation-

Ace Sanders
Photo by Brad Barr-US PRESSWIRE

SCOUTING REPORT: Offense

POS	STARTER	YR.	COMMENT	BACKUP/KEY DEPTH
QB	Connor Shaw*	Jr.	Was 8-1 as a starter in 2011.	Dylan Thompson, So.
TB	Marcus Lattimore*	Jr.	Heisman-caliber if that knee is healthy.	Kenny Miles, Sr.
WR	Ace Sanders*	Jr.	Expected to be the team's top receiver.	DeAngelo Smith, Jr.
WR	D.L. Moore	Sr.	Tallest WR on the team at 6-5.	Nick Jones, So.
WR	Damiere Byrd	So.	Track star who can get behind defense.	Shaq Roland, Fr.
TE	Justice Cunningham*	Sr.	Can also play the H-back role.	Rory Anderson, So.
LT	Brandon Shell	Fr.	Made big strides in the spring.	Brock Stadnik, Fr.
LG	A.J. Cann*	So.	Earned Freshman All-America accolades.	Kenny Davis, Sr.
C	T.J. Johnson*	Sr.	Fifth-year senior is leader of the line.	Kyle Harris, Fr.
RG	Ronald Patrick	Jr.	Gets first shot at being a starter.	Kaleb Broome, Sr.
RT	Mike Matulis*	So.	Missed spring after having shoulder surgery.	Cody Gibson, So.
K	Landon Ard	Fr.	It's a two-man race for the job.	Adam Yates, Sr.

*Returning Starter

SCOUTING REPORT: Defense

POS	STARTER	YR.	COMMENT	BACKUP/KEY DEPTH
DE	Devin Taylor*	Sr.	Passed on leaving early for the NFL.	Chaz Sutton, Jr.
DT	Byron Jerideau	Sr.	Spent time last year on OL.	Gerald Dixon Jr., Fr.
DT	Kelcy Quarles*	So.	Earned All-America Freshman honors.	Phillip Dukes, Fr.
DE	Jadeveon Clowney	So.	The reigning SEC Freshman of the Year.	Aldrick Fordham, Sr.
LB	Shaq Wilson*	Sr.	Fifth-year senior has played in 40 games.	Reginald Bowens, Sr.*
LB	Damario Jeffery	Sr.	Moved inside after playing Spur last year.	Quin Smith, Sr.
SPUR	DeVonte Holloman*	Sr.	Hybrid player can also play safety.	Sharrod Golightly, So.
CB	Akeem Auguste	Sr.	Has never recorded an INT in 36 games.	Jimmy Legree, Jr.
CB	Victor Hampton	So.	Good ball skills, but struggles in coverage.	Cadarious Sanders, So.
SS	Brison Williams	So.	Broken arm slowed him last year.	Kadetrix Marcus, So.
FS	D.J. Swearinger*	Sr.	Led the team with 80 tackles in 2011.	Sheldon Royster, Fr.
P	Mike Williamson	Jr.	Had the better spring practice.	Patrick Fish, So.

*Returning Starter

GAMECOCKS RECRUITING 2012

rivals.com

3 NEWCOMERS OF IMPACT

Mike Davis
Davis is a terrific running back who should make for a solid backup to starter Marcus Lattimore. While he isn't a burner, Davis gets it done because he's a patient, shifty and powerful back. He truly has great vision, and exceptional one-cut ability. He also runs with very good balance and knows how to block.

Shaq Roland
A four-star receiver, Roland was the state of South Carolina's top recruit in the 2012 class. While he is only of average size for a receiver, his ability helps him stand out from the crowd. He runs terrific routes, has very good top-end speed and arguably has one of the best sets of hands nationally among incoming freshman.

Chaz Elder
A four-star prospect from Georgia, Elder is a safety with good size and athleticism. He's excellent in coverage and against the run. What stands out is Elder's range and his length. He covers a lot of ground in the secondary and does an excellent job making a play on the ball. This was an outstanding pickup.

THE SLEEPER

Rico McWilliams
A three-star player at cornerback, McWilliams is a wiry defender that is quick and surprisingly strong and physical given his frame. He also has an excellent feel for the game. He could probably play just about anywhere in the secondary given his athleticism. And while he's a little thin, he's very stout versus the run.

Committments	25
Average Stars	3.24
★★★★★	0
★★★★☆	8
★★★☆☆	15
★★☆☆☆	2
Total Stars	81
National Rank: 19	SEC: 8

2013 NEEDS: South Carolina will be looking hard at defensive linemen. The reason? In the top group up front on defense are a few players that are either late in their college careers or have the potential to leave early for the NFL (see Jadeveon Clowney). In other words, expect a handful of signees here. Offensive line is another key area. The Gamecocks aren't desperate at that spot; v they just need a few players primarily for depth. Lastly, look for the Gamecocks to sign a quarterback, which is something they like to do each cycle.

by Keith Niebuhr/rivals.com

Name	Pos	Ht	Wt	Stars	Hometown	School
Jerell Adams	ATH	6-5	220	★★★★	Fork Union, VA	Fork Union Military Academy
Rated as the No. 3 prep school prospect in the country by Rivals.com...Originally signed with the Gamecocks out of Summerton (S.C.) Scotts Branch in 2011.						
Mike Davis	RB	5-10	200	★★★★	Stone Mountain, GA	Stephenson
Rivals100 selection...Rated as the No. 4 prospect in Georgia...Rated as the nation's No. 7 running back...Participated in the U.S. Army All-American Bowl...Rushed for 1,923 yards and 21 touchdowns as a senior.						
Jordan Diggs	DB	6-0	191	★★★★	Cape Coral, FL	Island Coast
Rated as the No. 44 prospect in Florida by Rivals.com...Rated as the nation's No. 11 safety...Chose South Carolina over Michigan State, Nebraska, Tennessee and Vanderbilt.						
Chaz Elder	DB	6-2	180	★★★★	College Park, GA	Banneker
Rated as the No. 23 prospect in Georgia by Rivals.com...Rated as the nation's No. 15 safety...Participated in the Under Armour All-American Bowl.						
Darius English	DE	6-6	210	★★★	Powder Springs, GA	McEachern
Rated as the No. 25 prospect in Georgia by Rivals.com...Rated as the nation's No. 22 weakside defensive end...Recorded 100 tackles and 22 sacks as a senior.						
Kyle Fleetwood	DB	5-11	200	★★★	Stone Mountain, GA	Stephenson
Rated as the No. 48 prospect in Georgia by Rivals.com...Rated as the nation's No. 38 safety.						
Jody Fuller	WR	6-0	200	★★★★	Monroe, NC	Sun Valley
Rivals250 selection...Rated as the No. 8 prospect in North Carolina...Rated as the nation's No. 37 wide receiver...Participated in the Shrine Bowl of the Carolinas.						
T.J. Gurley	DB	5-10	180	★★★	Cairo, GA	Cairo
Rated as the No. 72 prospect in Georgia by Rivals.com...Rated as the nation's No. 44 cornerback...Had 82 tackles and four interceptions as a senior.						
Joe Harris	OL	6-4	320	★★★★	Lithonia, GA	Lithonia
Rated as the No. 20 prospect in Georgia by Rivals.com...Rated as the nation's No. 13 offensive guard...Chose South Carolina over Alabama.						
T.J. Holloman	LB	6-2	215	★★★	Atlanta, GA	St Pius X School
Rated as the No. 64 prospect in Georgia by Rivals.com...Rated as the nation's No. 63 outside linebacker...Chose South Carolina over Illinois, Louisville and NC State.						
Carlos Hood	DT	6-4	275	★★★	Stone Mountain, GA	Stephenson
Rated as the No. 53 prospect in Georgia by Rivals.com...Rated as the nation's No. 46 defensive tackle...Selected to compete in the Offense-Defense All-American Bowl.						
Kaiwan Lewis	LB	6-2	227	★★★	Hammonton, NJ	St. Joseph
Rated as the No. 10 prospect in New Jersey by Rivals.com...Rated as the nation's No. 48 outside linebacker...Selected to play in the Offense-Defense All-American Bowl.						
Rico McWilliams	DB	6-0	170	★★★	Hampton, GA	Lovejoy
Rated as the No. 35 prospect in Georgia by Rivals.com...Rated as the nation's No. 26 cornerback ...Participated in the Offense-Defense All-American Bowl.						

Name	Pos	Ht	Wt	Stars	Hometown	School
Chris Moody	ATH	6-0	197	★★★	McDonough, GA	Henry County
Rated as the No. 67 prospect in Georgia by Rivals.com...Rated as the nation's No. 64 athlete.						
Brendan Nosovitch	QB	6-2	200	★★★	Allentown, PA	Central Catholic
Rated as the No. 20 prospect in Pennsylvania by Rivals.com...Rated as the nation's No. 22 pro-style quarterback.						
Kelvin Rainey	TE	6-3	218	★★★	Yulee, FL	Yulee
Rated as the No. 56 prospect in Florida by Rivals.com...Rated as the nation's No. 18 tight end.						
Shaq Roland	WR	6-2	180	★★★★	Lexington, SC	Lexington
Rivals100 selection...Rated as the No. 1 prospect in South Carolina...Rated as the nation's No. 10 wide receiver...Participated in the Under Armour All-American Game...Participated in the Shrine Bowl of the Carolinas.						
Kendric Salley	RB	5-10	210	★★★	Williston, SC	Williston Elko
Rated as the No. 20 prospect in South Carolina by Rivals.com...Rated as the nation's No. 45 running back.						
Kwinton Smith	WR	6-4	206	★★★	Dillon, SC	Dillon
Rated as the No. 6 prospect in South Carolina by Rivals.com...Rated as the nation's No. 51 wide receiver.						
Nick St. Germain	K	5-11	170	★★	Powder Springs, GA	McEachern
Was 11-of-17 on field goals, with a long of 49 yards, and a perfect 52-of-52 on extra point attempts as a senior.						
Brock Stadnik	OL	6-5	285	★★★★	Greensboro, NC	Western Guilford
Rated as the No. 10 prospect in North Carolina by Rivals.com...Rated as the nation's No. 36 offensive tackle.						
Clayton Stadnik	OL	6-2	255	★★★	Greensboro, NC	Western Guilford
Rated as the nation's No. 18 offensive center by Rivals.com...Brother of South Carolina signee Brock Stadnik.						
Jhaustin Thomas	DE	6-5	230	★★★	Decatur, GA	Columbia
Rated as the No. 75 prospect in Georgia by Rivals.com...Rated as the nation's No. 43 strongside defensive end.						
Cody Waldrop	OL	6-3	285	★★★	Seffner, FL	Armwood
Rated as the No. 45 prospect in Florida by Rivals.com...Rated as the nation's No. 16 offensive guard.						
Mason Zandi	OL	6-7	260	★★	Chapin, SC	Chapin
Played both ways and punted for Chapin High School...Chose South Carolina over Clemson.						

GAMECOCKS SPRING ROSTER

No.	Name	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.	Hometown
81	Rory Anderson	TE	6-5	218	So.	Powder Springs, GA
47	Landon Ard	P/K	5-9	189	Fr.	Rock Hill
3	Akeem Auguste	CB	5-9	188	Sr.	Hollywood, FL
26	Jacob Baker	FB	5-9	188	Sr.	Ridgeland
34	Joshua Blue	TB	5-7	167	So.	Tatum
32	Reginald Bowens	LB	6-3	254	Sr.	Holly Springs, NC
80	K.J. Brent	WR	6-4	184	Fr.	Waxhaw, NC
74	Kaleb Broome	OG	6-6	332	Sr.	Aiken
3	Damiere Byrd	WR	5-9	168	So.	Sicklerville, NJ
50	A.J. Cann	OG	6-4	309	So.	Bamberg
7	Shon Carson	TB	5-8	192	Fr.	Scranton
1	Ahmad Christian	CB	5-10	189	Fr.	Jacksonville, FL
86	Brett Cleveland	P	5-11	200	So.	Summerville
12	Andrew Clifford	QB	6-2	212	Jr.	Tampa, FL
7	Jadeveon Clowney	DE	6-6	256	So.	Rock Hill
48	Matt Coffee	FB	5-10	228	Jr.	Mary Esther, FL
18	Cedrick Cooper	LB	6-2	215	Fr.	Lithonia, GA
58	Ryland Culbertson	OG	6-4	254	So.	Laurens
87	Justice Cunningham	TE	6-4	264	Sr.	Pageland
72	Kenny Davis	OG	6-3	318	Sr.	Newberry
44	Gerald Dixon	DE	6-2	272	Fr.	Rock Hill
92	Gerald Dixon, Jr.	DT	6-3	304	Fr.	Rock Hill
89	Dwayne Duckett	WR	6-0	185	Fr.	Columbia
39	Jessie Dukes	DB	5-11	162	So.	Blackville
52	Phillip Dukes	DT	6-3	306	Fr.	Manning
23	Bruce Ellington	WR	5-9	197	So.	Moncks Corner
85	Patrick Fish	P	6-0	193	So.	Shelby, NC
61	Travis Ford	OC	6-3	278	Jr.	Fork
57	Aldrick Fordham	DE	6-4	269	Sr.	Jamestown
85	Riley Gallaher	WR	6-0	173	Fr.	Apex, NC
78	Cody Gibson	OT	6-7	278	So.	Tallahassee, FL
43	Qua Gilchrist	FB	6-1	245	Sr.	Abbeville
9	Sharrod Golightly	SPR	5-10	179	So.	Decatur, GA
93	Deon Green	DE	6-4	290	Fr.	Windermere, FL
29	Chaun Gresham	LB	6-2	266	Jr.	Auburn, GA
15	Austin Hails	QB	6-2	212	Fr.	Collinsville, IL
96	Jamal Hall	DE	6-2	232	Jr.	Ladson
27	Victor Hampton	CB	5-10	197	So.	Darlington
59	Coleman Harley	LS	6-1	280	Fr.	Aiken
70	Kyle Harris	OC	6-3	268	Fr.	Silver Creek, GA
34	Mason Harris	LB	6-3	210	Fr.	Fort Oglethorpe, GA
21	DeVonte Holloman	SPR	6-2	241	Sr.	Charlotte, NC
91	Walker Inabinet	LS	5-10	204	Sr.	Columbia
33	Damario Jeffery	LB	6-4	233	Sr.	Columbia
8	Shamier Jeffery	WR	6-1	214	Fr.	St. Matthews
70	Byron Jerideau	DT	6-1	316	Sr.	Green Pond
55	T.J. Johnson	OC	6-6	319	Sr.	Aynor
10	Nick Jones	WR	5-7	184	So.	Moore
21	Marcus Lattimore	TB	6-0	218	Jr.	Duncan
15	Jimmy Legree	CB	6-0	189	Jr.	Beaufort
86	Blair Lowery	WR	6-1	178	Sr.	Irmo
42	Marcus Lyerly	LB	5-11	225	So.	Columbia
25	Kadetrix Marcus	SS	6-1	185	So.	Stone Mountain, GA
76	Mike Matulis	OT	6-5	274	So.	Boynton Beach, FL
9	Tanner McEvoy	QB	6-6	209	Fr.	Hillsdale, NJ
41	Connor McLaurin	FB	6-0	222	So.	Raleigh, NC
31	Kenny Miles	TB	5-9	193	Sr.	Lawrenceville, GA
82	D.L. Moore	WR	6-5	198	Sr.	Bowling Green, KY
62	Davis Moore	LS	6-0	217	Jr.	Buford, GA
20	Edward Muldrow	LB	6-3	183	Fr.	Snellville, GA
88	Drew Owens	TE	6-6	236	Fr.	Charlotte, NC
67	Ronald Patrick	OG	6-2	305	Jr.	Cocoa, FL
99	Kelcy Quarles	DT	6-4	286	So.	Hodges
5	Kelvin Rainey	TE	6-3	219	Fr.	Yulee, FL
83	Sidney Rhodes	WR	5-10	170	So.	Easley
48	Marcquis Roberts	SPR	6-1	206	Fr.	Powder Springs, GA
66	Corey Robinson	OT	6-8	337	So.	Havelock, NC
26	Kenny Robinson	FS	5-9	176	So.	Hilton Head Island
4	Sheldon Royster	FS	5-11	185	Fr.	Woodbridge, NJ
1	Ace Sanders	WR	5-8	175	Jr.	Bradenton, FL
10	Cadarious Sanders	CB	6-0	189	So.	LaGrange, GA
11	Lamar Scruggs	WR	6-2	225	Jr.	Jacksonville Beach, FL
14	Connor Shaw	QB	6-1	207	Jr.	Flowery Branch, GA
28	Jared Shaw	SPR	5-10	179	Sr.	Fort Mill
71	Brandon Shell	OT	6-6	331	Fr.	Goose Creek
89	Corey Simmons	TE	6-5	255	So.	Lawrenceville, GA
46	Darian Sims	LB	6-2	250	Fr.	Goose Creek
6	DeAngelo Smith	WR	6-1	196	Jr.	Kingsland, GA
24	Quin Smith	LB	6-1	239	Sr.	Lenoir, NC
75	Will Sport	OT	6-5	291	Fr.	Milton, FL
65	Brock Stadnik	OT	6-5	287	Fr.	Greensboro, NC
54	Clayton Stadnik	OC	6-3	265	Fr.	Greensboro, NC
11	Seth Strickland	QB	6-2	195	Sr.	Laurens
97	J.T. Surratt	DT	6-2	295	So.	Winston-Salem, NC
45	Ty Sutherland	FB	5-10	220	Fr.	Pendleton
90	Chaz Sutton	DE	6-5	248	Jr.	Savannah, GA
36	D.J. Swearinger	FS	6-0	210	Sr.	Greenwood
98	Devin Taylor	DE	6-8	267	Sr.	Beaufort
17	Dylan Thompson	QB	6-3	212	So.	Boiling Springs
95	Michael Washington	DE	6-3	228	Fr.	Allendale
22	Brandon Wilds	TB	6-2	218	So.	Blythewood
12	Brison Williams	SS	5-11	205	So.	Warner Robins, GA
49	Darrius Williams	LB	6-2	230	Fr.	Belton
84	Mike Williamson	P	6-1	190	Jr.	Norway
54	Shaq Wilson	LB	5-11	224	Sr.	Jacksonville, FL
81	Adam Yates	PK	6-1	196	Sr.	Sparks, MD

INDIVIDUAL STATS

PASSING

	GP	Effic	Cmp	Att	Int	Pct	Yards	TD	Long	Avg/G
C. Shaw	10	148.31	123	188	6	65.4	1448	14	78	144.8
S. Garcia	5	107.71	61	118	9	51.7	844	4	52	168.8

RECEIVING

	GP	No.	Yards	Avg	TD	Long	Avg/G
A. Jeffery	13	49	762	15.6	8	78	58.6
A. Sanders	13	29	383	13.2	2	51	29.5
M. Lattimore	7	19	182	9.6	1	52	26.0

RUSHING

	GP	Att	Gain	Loss	Net	Avg	TD	Long	Avg/G
M. Lattimore	7	163	835	17	818	5.0	10	36	116.9
C. Shaw	10	135	705	180	525	3.9	8	60	52.5
B. Wilds	13	107	502	16	486	4.5	3	47	37.4

DEF. LEADERS

Tackles: A. Allen 88, D.J. Swearinger 80, R. Paulk 57
Tackles for loss: M. Ingram 15, J. Clowney 12, A. Allen 9.5
Sacks: M. Ingram 10, J. Clowney 8, D. Taylor 6
Interceptions: S. Gilmore 4, A. Allen 3, D.J. Swearinger 3, C.C. Whitlock 3

NOTEBOOK

Wide receiver **Bruce Ellington** nearly gave up football for good. The starting point guard on the South Carolina basketball team originally decided before spring practice to end his career as a two-sport athlete and focus on hoops.

However, not long after basketball coach Darrin Horn was fired and replaced by Frank Martin, Ellington had second thoughts and decided to play both again.

In 2011, Ellington caught 17 passes for 211 yards and a touchdown. He was South Carolina's "Wildcat" quarterback, rushing for 106 yards on 17 carries and a score on his way to All-SEC Freshman honors.

"I just want to play, get the ball in my hands and just create, do what I can do," said Ellington. "I think the coaches are going to let me do that. I learned how to play the game faster and better playing one year of college football."

In basketball, he averaged 11 points per game.

• **Steve Spurrier**'s coaching staff underwent more changes than **Lorenzo Ward**'s promotion to defensive coordinator and **Joe Robinson**'s hiring as special teams coordinator. A total of four coaches left for other jobs, while one was fired.

Kirk Botkin was hired to coach linebackers; **Grady Brown** was brought in to work with the secondary; **Everette Sands** is the new running backs coach; and **Joe Connelly** was promoted from assistant to head strength and conditioning coach.

• South Carolina's recent success — an SEC East championship in 2010 and an 11-win season in 2011 — is starting to help out with recruiting, Ward said.

"We're getting more kids on campus now," he said. "Ideally, if you can get a young man on campus three times, it's about an 85 percent chance you're going to get him. We understand that and we're getting a lot more young men coming through. They know what used to be is no longer at South Carolina."

• Williams-Brice Stadium, home of the Gamecocks, is getting a serious addition this year. The school is installing a new, $6.5 million videoboard that at 36-feet high and 124-feet wide will rank as the third largest in the SEC.

OPPOSING COACHES VIEW

• **On the development of the program:** "Coach Spurrier now has recruited SEC talent there. They've become SEC tough and they're a totally different program now than the day they joined, which people forget was 20 years ago. It took that long to make the program. They're not there yet but they're right on the doorstep."

• **On the Gamecocks' defense:** "Defensively, one of the most talented teams in the league. Up front, it's amazing what they've done in recruiting. They've got a couple of guys up front that are as good as anybody in country."

• **On losing defensive coordinator Ellis Johnson:** "It will be interesting to see, week in and week out, if they can sustain the level of defensive play they had with Ellis. He was the best defensive coordinator in the league."

Connor Shaw
Photo by Bruce L. Schwartzman

ally in total defense a year ago, so Ward isn't planning on changing much of Johnson's alignment, which uses four down linemen, two linebackers, a linebacker/safety hybrid and four defensive backs.

Ward does hope to utilize more blitzes, something Johnson was reluctant to do at times in the past few seasons.

"I think you take the guessing out of the game for a young man when you can tell them where they're going. That's what you do when you call pressure," Ward said. "You tell them where to go and then they got to read blocks and they're hitting gaps. So that makes the game a lot more fun when you know what you're doing.

"We'll do enough of that to hopefully help them play faster. When we have to play base, we'll play base."

Ward said he won't have any sleepless nights this fall worrying about his defense. Instead, he believes the opposing offense will be kept awake trying to figure out how to stop the 6-8 Devin Taylor and 6-6 Jadeveon Clowney. Both possess elite speed and athleticism to help make up one of the best defensive lines in the SEC.

South Carolina also has the luxury of four senior linebackers, including five-year veteran Shaq Wilson, for a unit that doesn't have to dominate, but needs to be steady in this system.

The secondary will be anchored by two veteran seniors in cornerback Akeem Auguste and free safety D.J. Swearinger. Auguste missed nearly all of last season with a foot injury, while Swearinger had offseason surgery. Swearinger's known as a big hitter but became a more disciplined ball hawk last year, recording three interceptions.

The rest of the secondary is quite young and inexperienced without cornerback Stephon Gilmore, who left early for the NFL. Depth could be a problem early.

"I feel like we'll have five or six guys on the perimeter that can play," Ward said.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Joe Robinson had one of the best special teams units in the SEC when he worked at LSU in 2009 and 2010. Now, he takes over for John Butler, who left to go to Penn State after just one season with the Gamecocks.

Robinson will have his hands full, especially with South Carolina's kicking game. The Gamecocks are replacing

BEST & BRIGHTEST

MOST VALUABLE PLAYER

QB Connor Shaw

Started nine games, including eight consecutive after Stephen Garcia was benched and booted from the team. ... Completed 65.4 percent of his passes for 1,448 yards and 14 touchdowns with six interceptions. ... Picked up 525 yards on the ground and eight more TDs. ... Spent offseason adding to his slight 6-1 frame and cut his 40-yard dash time to 4.5 seconds. ... Team might have brighter stars, but he is the unquestioned leader of the offense, on and off the field.

EMERGING STAR

WR Ace Sanders

Predicted by coach Steve Spurrier to have a big season. ... Has played in all 27 games in his career. ... Was second on the team in receiving in 2011, making 29 catches for 383 yards and two touchdowns. ... Will stay in the slot to take advantage of his quickness and speed against nickel corners, safeties and linebackers. ... Also the team's leading returning punt returner. ... His father, Tracy, played defensive back at Florida State alongside Deion Sanders.

TOP NEWCOMER

WR Shaq Roland

Became the fourth consecutive Mr. Football in the state of South Carolina to sign with the Gamecocks. ... Expected to make an instant impact with Alshon Jeffery gone to the NFL. ... At 6-2, 180 pounds, he has excellent ball-catching skills and is a dangerous returner. ... Totaled over 1,500 receiving yards and 32 total touchdowns in his senior season at Lexington High School. ... Made the 2012 *Parade* All-American team and played in the Under Armour All-American Game.

2009 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	20.6	102
Rushing	121.2	91
Passing	226.2	47
Total	347.4	82
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	20.4	24
Rushing	137.7	52
Passing	163.0	8
Total	300.7	15
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
- 4	- 0.31	81

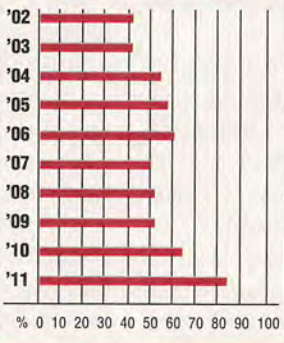
2010 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	30.9	38
Rushing	154.4	60
Passing	238.4	44
Total	392.8	47
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	23.1	43
Rushing	112.4	12
Passing	241.9	97
Total	354.4	46
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 0	+ 0.00	55

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	30.1	42
Rushing	192.1	25
Passing	181.5	95
Total	373.5	74
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	18.4	11
Rushing	136.0	45
Passing	131.7	2
Total	267.7	3
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 5	+ 0.38	30

10-YEAR WINNING TREND



RESULTS

11-2, 6-2

W	EAST CAROLINA	56-37
W	at Georgia	45-42
W	NAVY	24-21
W	VANDERBILT	21-3
L	AUBURN	13-16
W	KENTUCKY	54-3
W	at Mississippi State	14-12
W	at Tennessee	14-3
L	at Arkansas	28-44
W	FLORIDA	17-12
W	THE CITADEL	41-20
W	CLEMSON	34-13
	Capital One Bowl	
W	vs. Nebraska	30-13

PLAYER PROFILE

Jadeveon Clowney
Photo by Bruce L. Schwartzman

Wiser Clowney Poised For Huge Second Year

Jadeveon Clowney admits he didn't really know what he was doing at times last year. "I was just running around out there," he said.

Still, the South Carolina defensive end and former top recruit in the nation did pretty well for himself in his freshman season.

Clowney finished with eight sacks, 12 tackles for a loss and five forced fumbles, which ranked sixth nationally.

And all that was without having much time to grasp the system.

Clowney came to South Carolina mid-summer, and when fall practice began, he was thrown into the fire. That's what happens when you come in with so much talent.

Clowney was ranked as the No. 1 recruit nationally by every service. His high school coach, with a straight face, even said he could play in the NFL as an 18-year-old. There's no doubt Clowney came to the Gamecocks with more hype than any player in school history.

Still, the learning curve was steep at times.

"I didn't know that much last season. I was tip-toeing out there and not really knowing what I was going to do," Clowney said. "I still need some improvement on the other stuff, but I know more than I did last year already."

Clowney's now had plenty of time to learn the defense and get bigger and stronger. He's even ruined some of coach Steve Spurrier's practices. Following one spring session, Spurrier had to tell Clowney to quit beating his man off the line of scrimmage so the quarterbacks could get some work.

"His ceiling is high," defensive line coach Brad Lawing said. "He can be as good as he wants to be. He has made tremendous improvement."

Defensive coordinator Lorenzo Ward is looking into ways of utilizing Clowney more than just a bookend pass rusher. Last year, Melvin Ingram, who's now in the NFL, lined up inside at times — and it paid dividends for him and the entire defense.

With All-SEC pass rusher Devin Taylor still lining up on one side, Ward hopes Clowney can become an even bigger force in 2012.

"We'll try to create as many opportunities as we can to get Jadeveon one-on-one, because if he's outside, people are going to chip him," Ward said.

"If you put him inside, there's a chance for one-on-one. But there's also a chance they could always turn the center to him and double-team him inside. We'll have to figure out what's the best way to use him."

kicker Jay Wooten and punter Joey Scribner-Howard. Both jobs are up for grabs.

Landon Ard and Adam Yates are battling for the kicking role. Patrick Fish was expected to be the man but didn't punt well during the spring. Mike Williamson, a walk-on, appears to have taken the lead.

The Gamecocks were last in the SEC in kickoffs last year and the return units were barely average.

SCHEDULE ANALYSIS

Big changes came for the Gamecocks when the SEC expanded.

For this season, South Carolina's annual league opener against Georgia was moved from the second week to early October. That leaves a daunting stretch — vs. Georgia, at LSU, at Florida and vs. Tennessee — all in the same month.

Opening the season and SEC play at Vanderbilt on Aug. 30 won't be easy, either, but the Gamecocks do get non-conference home games against East Carolina and UAB before hosting Missouri for the first time.

This could also be the last year South Carolina regularly faces Arkansas, which visits in November, since Texas A&M is set to become the Gamecocks' constant West opponent beginning in 2013.

They'll end the regular season looking for their fourth consecutive victory over rival Clemson.

— Brad Senkiw

SCHEDULE

Date	Opponent	'11 Record
Aug. 30	at Vanderbilt	6-7
Sept. 8	EAST CAROLINA	5-7
Sept. 15	UAB	3-9
Sept. 22	MISSOURI	8-5
Sept. 29	at Kentucky	5-7
Oct. 6	GEORGIA	10-4
Oct. 13	at LSU	13-1
Oct. 20	at Florida	7-6
Oct. 27	TENNESSEE	5-7
Nov. 10	ARKANSAS	11-2
Nov. 17	WOFFORD	8-4
Nov. 24	at Clemson	10-4

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TENNESSEE VOLUNTEERS

For more coverage of the Volunteers, visit tennessee.rivals.com

OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Jim Chaney | **DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Sal Sunseri** | **STADIUM: Neyland Stadium: 102,037**

AT A GLANCE

2011:
5-7 overall, 1-7 SEC (6th, East)

COACH:
Derek Dooley — At Tennessee: 11-14, 2 years; overall: 28-34 overall, 5 years

RETURNING STARTERS:
20; 10 offense, 8 defense, kicker, punter

PLAYERS TO WATCH:
QB Tyler Bray, WR Justin Hunter, WR Da'Rick Rogers, OL JaWuan James, LB A.J. Johnson, LB Curt Maggitt, DB Prentiss Waggner, DB Brian Randolph

PRIMARY STRENGTHS:
Passing game. No SEC team has more talented receivers, and Bray is one of the SEC's elite quarterbacks. The offensive line — underachievers in recent years — should be ready to emerge. On defense, UT has quality linebackers in Johnson, Maggitt and Herman Lathers.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS:
The run game was the worst at UT since 1964, averaging 2.8 yards per carry, and Tauren Poole, a 1,000-yard rusher in 2010, is gone. The Vols might not have the personnel to run a 3-4 defense, and the secondary, despite plenty of athletes, hasn't jelled in years. Another concern: overall leadership.

KEY LOSSES:
RB Tauren Poole, DL Malik Jackson, LB Austin Johnson

OVERVIEW:
Dooley has improved the roster considerably since he took over, and the passing game could be the best in the SEC. Mounting a run game is critical, and UT doesn't have a proven runner. The defense has a lot of above-average players, but not many playmakers. With a potentially explosive offense and more athletes on defense, the Vols could win eight games, but the East title seems out of reach.

Experienced Squad Seeks to Remove Dooley from Hot Seat

In the midst of Tennessee's worst four-year run in program history, coach Derek Dooley finds himself right smack on the hot seat as he enters his third season.

Since 2008, Tennessee is 23-27 overall, 11-21 in the SEC. In Dooley's two seasons, the Vols are 11-14 and coming off a worst-ever 1-7 SEC mark that included the first loss to Kentucky since 1984.

"You're always on the hot seat in this profession," Dooley said.

Knowing Dooley was in trouble, six assistants left for lateral jobs and another retired. With seven new staff members, one goal of the spring was to find chemistry among the coaches and install a 3-4 defense under new coordinator Sal Sunseri, hired away from Alabama for the pricey sum of $2.4 million over three years.

"The staff meshed," Dooley said. "It was as seamless a transition as I've ever been a part of."

Dooley said he spent sleepless nights after the Kentucky defeat. Some seniors accused the underclassmen of dogging it because they didn't want to play in a lesser-tier bowl game.

"When you lose, there are a lot of emotions that fly," Dooley said. "People say things that maybe they didn't mean or maybe they regret. Our team dynamic was not what it needed to be."

There were "cliques" on the team, center Alex Bullard said. "We realized not being close hurt us."

Bullard said the players pulled together this spring. Dooley felt the same way.

"Nothing was more important than our team chemistry and our commitment to improve," Dooley said. "I was proud of how the team showed a lot of maturity and a lot of growth."

Dooley's roster is far better than what he inherited two years ago in the aftermath of three coaches in three years. Tennessee returns an SEC-high 20 starters, counting special teams players.

The passing game should rank among the SEC's best. The run game should be much improved. UT's starting linebackers — when healthy — rank among the top five in the SEC. And the secondary has talent.

Concerns are stopping the run, adapting to the new 3-4 scheme (though Dooley is quick to note UT also will use a 4-3) and the kicking game. Tennessee didn't kick or punt with consistency during the spring.

Despite some shortfalls, junior outside linebacker Jacques Smith was setting his sight on a big prize — the SEC title.

"That's always my goal every single year," Smith said. "Win an SEC championship, win our Bowl Championship Series (game) and hopefully compete for a national championship."

OFFENSE

How bad was UT's run game last season? Not only did it rank 116 out of 120 teams at 90 yards per game, 41 running backs and three quarterbacks across the nation each had more yards rushing.

Dooley repeatedly said the spring emphasis was on a physical approach to running the ball.

In 2010, UT's offensive line returned a combined three starts. Entering this season, the line has grown to 99 combined starts. Add new position coach Sam Pittman to the equation, and the prospects for improvement are bright.

Center Alex Bullard said the line was physical enough last year to get the job done; it just didn't execute.

"We believe the offensive line is supposed to be the tightest group on the team," Bullard said. "We have talks and

Tyler Bray
Photo by Randy Sartin-US PRESSWIRE

say, 'Look, when we play Florida this year, we are knocking heads off.'"

Offensive coordinator Jim Chaney admitted he needs to be more committed to the run game as well, not just taking to the air if the first few runs don't produce.

"Every play-caller has that dilemma," Chaney said. "It's much easier to give up on the run game than the pass game."

Especially when you have a gunslinger like Tyler Bray and talented receivers like Justin Hunter and Da'Rick Rogers. Bray has six 300-yard games and 35 touchdown passes in only 12 career starts.

Despite posting gaudy numbers, Bray has yet to beat an SEC team with a winning record, and the junior quarterback has relied more on talent than mastering the position.

"I think he's learned from his mistakes," Chaney said. "I see a more mature kid that's trying to work on the detail things we're asking him to do. I think right now he's focused on becoming a better football player."

Hunter and Rogers were lethal weapons before a torn ACL ended Hunter's season in Game 3 against Florida. Rogers (67 for 1,040 yards) made first-team All-SEC last year and Hunter is even better. Tight end Mychal Rivera could have a 40-catch season. They'll be joined by a great recruiting class, led by junior college transfer Cordarrelle Patterson.

"We can be explosive," Hunter said.

UT's running backs are unproven. Marlin Lane was OK as a freshman, coming off an ACL tear as a high school senior. The fleet-footed Rajion Neal was moved from tailback to receiver, then back to tailback. Cat-quick Devrin Young (5-7, 171) was productive in scrimmages but probably can't handle more than 15 touches a game.

The offensive line returns all five starters, led by right tackle Ja'Wuan James and left guard Dallas Thomas. Thomas was moved from left tackle to make room for 6-6, 330-pound Antonio "Tiny" Richardson. Bullard is one of the SEC's top centers. Zach Fulton and James Stone will battle for the right guard spot.

DEFENSE

Despite a shortage of talent and experience last season, Tennessee's defense ranked 28th in the nation in yards allowed. But that didn't satisfy Dooley.

"We didn't affect the game enough," Dooley said, pointing to a shortage of sacks, lost yardage plays and forced turnovers. "We need to be a little more multiple."

So, Dooley hired Sal Sunseri when former defensive coordinator Justin Wilcox left for Washington. Sunseri, who spent the previous three years helping Alabama win two national championships, installed about 80 percent of his 3-4 alignment during the spring.

Da'Rick Rogers
Photo by Mark Zerof-US PRESSWIRE

SCOUTING REPORT: Offense

POS	STARTER	YR.	COMMENT	BACKUP/KEY DEPTH
QB	Tyler Bray*	Jr.	Strong, accurate arm; needs to be consistent.	Justin Worley, So.
RB	Marlin Lane	So.	Decent speed and moves; averaged 3.7 ypc.	Rajion Neal, Jr.
FB	Ben Bartholomew*	Sr.	Solid blocker; decent hands; can play H-back.	Brendan Downs, So.
WR	Justin Hunter	Jr.	All-SEC talent; tore ACL in third game of 2011.	Zach Rogers, Sr.*
WR	Da'Rick Rogers*	Jr.	67 catches for 1,040 yards, SEC-best nine TDs.	Cordarrelle Patterson, Jr.
TE	Mychal Rivera*	Sr.	Second on team with 29 catches; solid blocker.	Cam Clear, So.
LT	Tiny Richardson	So.	A massive 6-6, 330; budding star with strength.	Kyler Kerbyson, Fr.
LG	Dallas Thomas*	Sr.	Moved from LT to LG; plays with good technique.	Marcus Jackson, So.*
C	Alex Bullard*	Jr.	Moved from G to C at midseason; solid anchor.	Mack Crowder, Fr.
RG	Zach Fulton*	Jr.	Solid run blocker; 17 career starts.	James Stone, Jr.
RT	Ja'Wuan James*	Jr.	Two-year starter; pro potential; 25 starts leads OL.	Alan Posey, Fr.
K	Michael Palardy*	Jr.	Hit 9 of 14 FGs; plagued by injuries, inconsistency.	Derrick Brodus, So.

*Returning Starter

SCOUTING REPORT: Defense

POS	STARTER	YR.	COMMENT	BACKUP/KEY DEPTH
DE	Darrington Sentimore	Jr.	Alabama, JC transfer well suited for position.	Steven Fowlkes, Sr.
NT	Mo Couch	Jr.	JC transfer; had 37 stops due to strong second half.	Daniel Hood, Jr.*
DE	Marlon Walls	Jr.	Gained 60 pounds in three years to adapt to position.	Jordan Williams, So.
LB	Curt Maggitt*	So.	SEC All-Freshman pick; 56 tackles fourth on team.	Dontavis Sapp, Jr.
LB	A.J. Johnson*	So.	Freshman All-American; 80 stops second on team.	John Propst, Jr.
LB	Herman Lathers	Sr.	Missed last year due to injury; 75 tackles in 2010.	Greg King, Jr.
LB	Jacques Smith*	Jr.	Switched from DE; needs to make more plays.	Willie Bohannon, Sr.
CB	Prentiss Waggner*	Sr.	Seven INTs in past two years; good instincts.	E. Gordon, Jr./M. Teague, Sr.*
CB	Justin Coleman	So.	After shaky frosh season, blossomed in spring.	Izauea Lanier, Jr.*
SS	Brian Randolph*	So.	Second-team Freshman All-American; had 55 tackles.	Brent Brewer, Jr.
FS	Byron Moore	Jr.	USC transfer who initially struggled to adjust.	Rod Wilks, Sr.
P	Matt Darr*	So.	Averaged only 38.1 yards, splitting duties.	Michael Palardy, Jr.

*Returning Starter

VOLUNTEERS RECRUITING 2012

rivals.com

3 NEWCOMERS OF IMPACT

LaDarrell McNeil
This was a huge get for the Volunteers, who pulled McNeil out of Texas. He's a top-10 player nationally at his position, and is a terrific addition to the Tennessee secondary as a big-time enforcer on the back end. McNeil has good size and speed, and covers a ton of ground. He has the ability to be the type of defensive difference-maker this team has needed.

Cordarrelle Patterson
Patterson is one of those big receivers this program seems to love. He's 6-4 and weighs over 200 pounds. But Patterson isn't just a big target; he also runs very well and accelerates rapidly. In the open field, he's extremely dangerous because he makes a quick move after the catch, and has really good one-cut ability.

Nathan Peterman
When you talk about Peterman, one of the first things that comes to mind is the word consistency. He's an accurate signal-caller with above-average arm strength who can make all of the throws needed to thrive in the SEC. Peterman also is poised in the pocket, but can run when needed. This is a good player around which to build an offense.

THE SLEEPER

Quenshaun Watson
A late discovery by the Volunteers from Georgia who was flying under the radar, Watson isn't particularly big, but has true game-breaking speed, which is one thing Tennessee has lacked a bit in the backfield recently. Watson also could be utilized in the passing game because of his abilities in space, where he is especially dangerous.

Committments	21
Average Stars	3.38
★★★★★	0
★★★★☆	10
★★★☆☆	9
★★☆☆☆	2
Total Stars	71
National Rank: 17	SEC: 6

2013 NEEDS: Tennessee, which traditionally has been a very good offensive line school, didn't sign a single one in February after it swung and missed on a few kids. Now, that area becomes priority No. 1 for 2013. The Vols' starting group consists mostly of juniors. Look for Tennessee to go heavy here, and sign somewhere between four or five. Linebacker is another crucial area, and it could bring in three or four. At running back, two signees are likely and the hope is that at least one of them is a marquee recruit.

by Keith Niebuhr, Rivals.com

Name	Pos	Ht	Wt	Stars	Hometown	School
Cody Blanc	ATH	6-1	200	★★	Knoxville, TN	Knoxville Central
Rushed for 1,171 yards and 11 touchdowns on offense and recorded 55 tackles on defense as a junior...Chose Tennessee over Virginia Tech and Vanderbilt.						
Deion Bonner	DB	5-11	185	★★★★	Columbus, GA	Carver
Rivals250 selection...Rated as the No. 16 prospect in Georgia...Rated as the nation's No. 19 cornerback...Played in six games as a senior, recording 27 tackles and nine interceptions.						
Davante Bourque	ATH	6-3	200	★★★★	Crowley, LA	Crowley
Rivals250 selection...Rated as the No. 6 prospect in Louisiana...Rated as the nation's No. 14 athlete...Chose Tennessee over Miami and others.						
Drae Bowles	WR	6-1	198	★★★★	Jackson, TN	Jackson Christian
Rivals250 selection...Rated as the No. 2 prospect in Tennessee...Rated as the nation's No. 19 wide receiver...Participated in the U.S. Army All-American Bowl...Had 31 receptions for 519 yards and five touchdowns as a senior.						
George Bullock	K	6-1	195	★★	Knoxville, TN	West
Participated in the Offense-Defense All-American Bowl...Chose Tennessee over Navy.						
Kenneth Bynum	LB	6-1	213	★★★	Jacksonville, FL	Raines
Late addition to the Tennessee class...Signed with the Vols after backing off a commitment to Cincinnati.						
Jason Croom	WR	6-5	212	★★★★	Norcross, GA	Norcross
Rivals250 selection...Rated as the No. 18 prospect in Georgia...Rated as the nation's No. 41 wide receiver...Participated in the Offense-Defense All-American Bowl.						
Daniel Gray	DB	6-0	165	★★★	Lauderdale Lakes, FL	Boyd Anderson
Had 24 tackles and four interceptions as a senior...Chose Tennessee over Nebraska, Texas Tech, West Virginia and others.						
Alden Hill	RB	6-2	217	★★★	Alliance, OH	Marlington
Rated as the No. 44 prospect in Ohio by Rivals.com...Rated as the nation's No. 47 running back ...Enrolled at Tennessee in January.						
Alton Howard	WR	5-9	178	★★★★	Orlando, FL	Edgewater
Rated as the No. 43 prospect in Florida by Rivals.com...Rated as the nation's No. 47 wide receiver...Participated in the Under Armour All-American Game.						
Justin King	ATH	6-3	215	★★★	Dunwoody, GA	Dunwoody
Rated as the No. 60 prospect in Georgia by Rivals.com...Rated as the nation's No. 59 athlete.						

Name	Pos	Ht	Wt	Stars	Hometown	School
LaTroy Lewis	DE	6-4	230	★★★	Akron, OH	Hoban
Rated as the No. 28 prospect in Ohio by Rivals.com...Rated as the nation's No. 27 strongside defensive end...Had 70 tackles and 13 sacks as a junior.						
Daniel McCullers	DT	6-6	380	★★★★	Milledgeville, GA	Georgia Military College
Rated as the nation's No. 6 junior college prospect by Rivals.com...Chose Tennessee over Alabama and Mississippi State...Had 15 sacks in 2010.						
LaDarrell McNeil	DB	6-1	190	★★★★	Dallas, TX	Wilmer-Hutchins
Rivals100 selection...Rated as the No. 11 prospect in Texas...Rated as the nation's No. 21 tight end...Participated in the U.S. Army All-American Bowl.						
Justin Meredith	TE	6-5	216	★★★	Anderson, SC	T. L. Hanna
Rated as the No. 12 prospect in South Carolina by Rivals.com...Rated as the nation's No. 10 wide receiver...Participated in the Under Armour All-American Game...Participated in the Shrine Bowl of the Carolinas....Enrolled at Tennessee in January.						
Danny O'Brien	DT	6-2	293	★★★★	Flint, MI	Powers Catholic
Rivals100 selection...Rated as the No. 2 prospect in Michigan...Rated as the nation's No. 12 defensive tackle.						
Cordarrelle Patterson	WR	6-4	205	★★★★	Hutchinson, KS	Hutchinson C.C.
Rated as the nation's No. 4 junior college prospect by Rivals.com...Chose Tennessee over Auburn, Georgia, LSU and Ole Miss.						
Nathan Peterman	QB	6-2	215	★★★★	Fruit Cove, FL	Bartram Trail
Rated as the No. 42 prospect in Florida by Rivals.com...Rated as the nation's No. 8 pro-style quarterback...Participated in the Offense-Defense All-American Bowl...Enrolled at Tennessee in January.						
Darrington Sentimore	DE	6-3	288	★★★	Perkinston, MS	Gulf Coast C.C.
Rated as the nation's No. 22 junior college prospect by Rivals.com...Enrolled at Tennessee in January.						
Trent Taylor	DE	6-2	271	★★★	Lakeland, FL	Lake Gibson
Rated as the No. 46 prospect in Florida by Rivals.com...Rated as the nation's No. 19 strongside defensive end...Enrolled at Tennessee in January.						
Quenshaun Watson	RB	5-9	175	★★★	Athens, GA	Clarke Central
Rushed for 1,790 yards and 26 touchdowns as a senior...Chose Tennessee over Indiana.						

VOLUNTEERS SPRING ROSTER

No.	Name	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.	Hometown
7	Corey Alexander	DB	5-5	160	Jr.	Gallatin
60	Carson Anderson	OL	6-1	282	Sr.	Florence, AL
30	Max Arnold	QB	6-1	182	So.	McKenzie
65	Joseph Ayres	DL	6-3	280	Jr.	Knoxville
39	Ben Bartholomew	FB	6-2	251	Sr.	Nashville
36	Cody Blanc	ATH	6-1	200	Fr.	Knoxville
86	Willie Bohannon	LB	6-2	250	Sr.	Mobile, AL
45	Austin Bolen	FB	5-11	217	So.	Knoxville
8	Tyler Bray	QB	6-6	213	Jr.	Kingsburg, CA
17	Brent Brewer	LB	6-1	217	Jr.	Tyrone, GA
26	Derrick Brodus	PK/P	5-11	185	So.	Maryville
78	Alex Bullard	OL	6-2	304	Jr.	Franklin
39	Michael Cantwell	LB/DS	5-11	210	So.	Morristown
53	J.R. Carr	DS	5-10	220	Jr.	Lomita, CA
69	Allan Carson	DL	6-2	320	So.	Oxford, AL
27	Jacob Carter	WR	6-0	190	So.	Nashville
93	Gregory Clark	DL	6-2	318	So.	Warner Robins, GA
88	Cameron Clear	TE	6-6	283	So.	Memphis
27	Justin Coleman	DB	5-10	180	So.	Brunswick, GA
79	Brock Collier	OL	6-3	268	So.	Joelton
19	Tyler Coombes	DB	6-0	193	So.	Lebanon
44	Maurice Couch	DL	6-2	295	Jr.	Orlando, FL
57	Mack Crowder	OL	6-2	280	Fr.	Bristol
50	Raiques Crump	LB	6-1	220	Jr.	Birmingham, AL
6	Vincent Dallas	WR	5-11	186	So.	Ellenwood, GA
43	Matt Darr	P	6-1	214	So.	Bakersfield, CA
85	Brendan Downs	TE	6-5	251	So.	Bristol
3	Tyler Drummer	WR	6-1	172	Jr.	Powell
87	Alex Ellis	WR	6-4	224	So.	Del Mar, DE
15	Tyrin Fairman	DB	5-9	170	So.	Monmouth Junction, NJ
90	Steven Fowlkes	DL	6-5	254	Sr.	College Park, GA
46	Channing Fugate	LB	6-1	223	Jr.	Jackson, Ky.
72	Zach Fulton	OL	6-5	319	Jr.	Homewood, IL
65	Jacob Gilliam	OL	6-4	283	So.	Knoxville
73	Darin Gooch	OL	6-2	304	Sr.	Reno, NV
24	Eric Gordon	DB	5-9	197	Jr.	Nashville
59	Gregory Grieco	LB	5-10	222	So.	Knoxville
52	Christian Harris	LB	6-2	238	Fr.	Woodstock, GA
57	Andrew Henry	LS	6-2	211	So.	Gallatin
30	Alden Hill	TB	6-2	217	Fr.	Alliance, OH
38	Logan Honeycutt	LB	6-2	222	So.	Johnson City
76	Daniel Hood	DL	6-4	293	Jr.	Knoxville
11	Justin Hunter	WR	6-4	200	Jr.	Virginia Beach, VA
68	Marcus Jackson	OL	6-2	318	So.	Vero Beach, FL
70	Ja'Wuan James	OL	6-6	320	Jr.	Suwanee, GA
45	A.J. Johnson	LB	6-3	244	So.	Gainesville, GA
22	Reggie Juin	TB	5-7	170	Jr.	Conyers, GA
77	Kyler Kerbyson	OL	6-5	320	Fr.	Knoxville
48	Greg King	LB	6-2	238	Jr.	Memphis
15	Marlin Lane, Jr.	TB	6-0	205	So.	Daytona Beach, FL
9	Izauea Lanier	DB	6-1	188	Jr.	Gordo, AL
34	Herman Lathers	LB	6-0	225	Sr.	Baton Rouge, LA
56	Curt Maggitt	LB	6-3	227	So.	West Palm Beach, FL
82	Justin Meredith	TE	6-5	216	Fr.	Anderson, SC
42	Nigel Mitchell-Thornton	LB	6-1	239	Sr.	Stone Mountain, GA
71	Isaac Mobley	OL	6-1	330	Jr.	Knoxville
3	Byron Moore	DB	6-1	196	Jr.	Carson, CA
20	Rajion Neal	TB	5-11	210	Jr.	Fayetteville, GA
13	Naz Oliver	WR	5-10	180	Jr.	Jersey City, NJ
26	Geraldo Orta	DB	6-0	180	Fr.	Valdosta, GA
17	Tyler Page	QB	6-3	193	So.	Candler, NC
66	Marques Pair	OL	6-5	325	So.	Sumter, SC
1	Michael Palardy	PK/P	5-11	177	Jr.	Coral Springs, FL
12	Nathan Peterman	QB	6-2	215	Fr.	Fruit Cove, FL
89	Bryant Plumlee	TE	6-2	230	So.	Springfield
67	Alan Posey	OL	6-6	317	Fr.	Athens, GA
47	John Propst	LB	6-0	225	Jr.	Hoover, AL
37	Brian Randolph	DB	6-0	189	So.	Marietta, GA
74	Antonio Richardson	OL	6-6	330	So.	Nashville
81	Mychal Rivera	TE	6-3	251	Sr.	Valencia, CA
21	Da'Rick Rogers	WR	6-3	208	Jr.	Calhoun, GA
83	Zach Rogers	WR	6-0	180	Sr.	Nashville
41	Dontavis Sapp	LB	6-2	223	Jr.	Valdosta, GA
96	Trevarris Saulsberry	DL	6-5	280	Fr.	Gainesville, FL
94	Darrington Sentimore	DL	6-3	288	Jr.	Norco, LA
55	Jacques Smith	LB	6-2	242	Jr.	Ooltewah
29	Tom Smith	TB	5-11	207	So.	Apopka, FL
64	James Stone	OL	6-3	310	Jr.	Nashville
24	Deanthonie Summerhill	TB	5-9	197	So.	Tuscumbia, AL
43	Dakota Summers	TE	6-3	232	So.	Camden
48	Austin Taylor	FB	6-2	245	So.	Alamo
99	Trent Taylor	DL	6-2	271	Fr.	Lakeland, FL
10	Marsalis Teague	DB	5-10	183	Sr.	Paris
71	Dallas Thomas	OL	6-5	300	Sr.	Baton Rouge, LA
31	Tino Thomas	DB	6-0	199	Fr.	Memphis
31	Jaron Toney	DB	5-10	186	So.	Alcoa
63	Evan Volner	OL	6-3	266	So.	Scotts Hill
23	Prentiss Waggner	DB	6-2	180	Sr.	Clinton, LA
58	Marlon Walls	DL	6-2	283	Jr.	Olive Branch, MS
80	Dylan West	WR	6-1	180	So.	Oneida
22	Rod Wilks	DB	6-0	217	Sr.	Smyrna
54	Jordan Williams	DL	6-5	255	So.	Gainesville, FL
2	Michael Williams	DB	5-10	176	So.	Knoxville
14	Justin Worley	QB	6-4	211	So.	Rock Hill, SC
19	Devrin Young	TB	5-7	175	So.	Knoxville

INDIVIDUAL STATS

PASSING

Name	GP	Effic	Cmp	Att	Int	Pct	Yds	TD	Lng	Avg/G
T. Bray	7	144.8	147	247	6	59.5	1983	17	81	283.3
J. Worley	4	110.4	48	87	3	55.2	604	1	50	151.0

RECEIVING

Name	GP	No.	Yds	Avg	TD	Lg	Avg/G
D. Rogers	12	67	1040	15.5	9	58	86.7
M. Rivera	12	29	344	11.9	1	20	28.7
D. Arnett	12	24	242	10.1	2	35	20.2

RUSHING

Name	GP	Att	Gain	Loss	Net	Avg	TD	Lg	Avg/G
T. Poole	12	187	736	43	693	3.7	5	28	57.8
M. Lane	12	75	305	25	280	3.7	2	45	23.3
R. Neal	11	27	152	18	134	5.0	2	20	12.2

DEF. LEADERS

Tackles: A. Johnson 81, A.J. Johnson 80, M. Jackson 56
Tackles for loss: M. Jackson 11, J. Smith 7.5, M. Couch 6
Sacks: M. Jackson 2.5, P. Waggner 2, two tied with 1.5
Interceptions: A. Johnson 4, P. Waggner 2, E. Gordon 2

NOTEBOOK

Spring awards: Running back **Devrin Young** (5-7, 171) was named the surprise offensive player, while defensive end **Steven Fowlkes** was named the surprise defensive player. Offseason workout awards went to quarterback **Tyler Bray**, offensive tackle **Ja'Wuan James**, defensive end **Jordan Williams** and defensive back **Brian Randolph**.

Young might have helped himself as much as anyone this spring, showing a solid burst against the first-team defense. He might not be an everydown back at his size, but he should be able to help out, adding some carries to his return duties.

• Tennessee moved fullback **Channing Fugate** to linebacker, running back **Jaron Toney** to defensive back, left tackle **Dallas Thomas** to left guard, receiver **Rajion Neal** back to running back, and defensive ends **Jacques Smith** and **Willie Bohannon** to outside linebacker in new 3-4 alignment.

• Tennessee lost receiver **DeAnthony Arnett** (transfer), defensive lineman **Arthur Jeffery** (transfer), and offensive lineman **JerQuari Schofield** (academics).

• Four returning starters had non-contact jerseys throughout the spring: wide receiver **Justin Hunter** (ACL), cornerback **Prentiss Waggner** (shoulder), defensive lineman **Daniel Hood** (shoulder) and strong safety **Brent Brewer** (shoulder).

• After going 5 for 30 in last year's spring game, Tyler Bray was 14 of 26 for 157 yards this spring. He attributed maturity for his improvement. Also in the spring game, running back **Marlin Lane** staked a claim to the starting role, rushing for a team-high 106 yards (against the second-string defense). He added 93 yards on three kick returns.

• Starting free safety **Brian Randolph** had an interception in each of the first two scrimmages and added a fumble recovery in the spring game.

• Hoping to improve on an anemic run attack last year, the Vols had 251 yards on 45 carries in the spring game, marking the second time that UT rushed for more than 250 yards in a scrimmage this year.

• Tennessee opens the season with an ACC opponent for the first time since 1982 when it played Duke. The Vols play North Carolina State in Atlanta, marking the first meeting between these schools since 1939.

OPPOSING COACHES VIEW

• **On the Vols' outlook:** "Regardless that the talent is down and the coach is on the hot seat, it's simply going to come down to number of wins. And it's not going to be pretty even if they get the right number of wins because they're not talented enough to be pretty."

• **On Tennessee's offense:** "LSU has four running backs better than Tennessee's best running back. I think offensively they're talented enough to be good. ... They've got receivers that stack up with anybody in the league. Up front they did a good job blocking some of the better defenses in the league. It depends on the consistency of the quarterback play and the offense. They don't have to score every time they get the football, but if they move the chains they've got a chance to play good football."

Curt Maggitt
Photo by RD Moore

"The kids have bought in and they've worked their butts off," Sunseri said.

UT doesn't have all the body types necessary for a 3-4, as the defensive ends are a bit light for the position. That has required some shifting of duties. For example, defensive ends Jacques Smith and Willie Bohannon were moved to outside linebacker.

The linebacker position should be strong. A.J. Johnson earned Freshman All-America honors last years and recorded 80 tackles, second most by a UT freshman to Eric Berry. Curt Maggitt made the SEC All-Freshman team. And senior Herman Lathers, who missed last year due to injury, had a strong spring.

The defensive line is suspect. Mo Couch and Greg Clark were the nose tackles, but 380-pound junior college signee Daniel McCullers could provide immediate help, if he keeps his weight under control.

The ends are Steven Fowlkes, Marlon Walls, Trevarris Saulsberry, Trent Taylor and junior college transfer Darrington Sentimore, who played at Alabama in 2010 for Sunseri. None is proven. They have combined for 32 career tackles at UT, 28 by Walls.

The secondary has some proven players and depth, but the unit ranked 10th in the SEC in pass efficiency defense and recorded just nine interceptions. The revamped defensive staff includes one coach for cornerbacks and one for safeties.

UT was pleased with the improved play of safeties Brain Randolph and Byron Moore, and cornerback Justin Coleman. Senior Prentiss Waggner, who can play corner or safety, had five interceptions in 2010, three returned for touchdowns. Brent Brewer got a brief look at linebacker before returning to strong safety. Eric Gordon, who beat Vanderbilt in overtime with an interception return for a touchdown, is the nickel back. Izauea Lanier made nine starts at corner.

One of Dooley's main concerns is stopping the run in a run-oriented league.

"We'll have to do some things to stop the run," Dooley said. "Nobody on the defensive line, 'We'll whip your tail on offense.' When we play base defense, we give up a lot of yards."

SPECIAL TEAMS

Except for kick and punt coverage, this was a weak area for Tennessee last year. Michael Palardy made just 9 of 14 field-goal attempts and had two blocked

BEST & BRIGHTEST

MOST VALUABLE PLAYER

QB Tyler Bray

Bray has a big-time arm and he's already produced six 300-yard games. ... He averaged 283.3 yards per game last year. ... Has chalked up 35 touchdown passes in just 12 career starts — he missed five games last season with a broken thumb. ... Needs to improve consistency, leadership skills and ability to manage the run game. ... His 405 passing yards vs. Cincinnati last season were the most in a game by a Tennessee quarterback not named Peyton Manning.

EMERGING STAR

LB A.J. Johnson

Was a consensus Freshman All-American after ranking second on the team with 80 tackles — second-most by a Tennessee freshman ever. ... Had double-digit tackles against Top 15 teams LSU, Alabama and South Carolina. ... Has the ability to be first-team All-SEC and a high NFL draft pick. ... Was rated as a four-star recruit by Rivals.com, which pegged him as the nation's No. 136 overall prospect.

TOP NEWCOMER

WR Cordarrelle Patterson

A five-star prospect, Patterson was ranked the nation's No. 1 junior college player after catching 61 passes for 924 yards and 15 touchdowns at Hutchinson (Kan.) Community College. ... Averaged 48.2 yards on 10 kickoff returns with three touchdowns. ... Was a JC All-American as a return specialist in his freshman season. ... Played high school ball with UT backup quarterback Justin Worley.

2009 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	29.3	43
Rushing	157.2	54
Passing	226.3	46
Total	383.5	60
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	22.2	38
Rushing	149.5	65
Passing	169.2	12
Total	318.8	22
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 3	+ 0.23	47

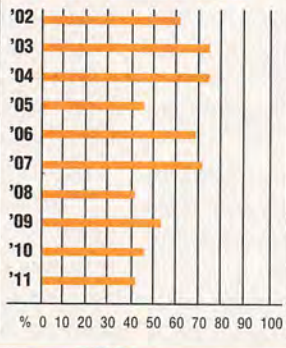
2010 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	27.0	58
Rushing	109.2	105
Passing	254.5	30
Total	363.8	75
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	25.1	56
Rushing	152.5	60
Passing	229.6	81
Total	382.2	69
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 4	+ 0.31	36

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	20.3	106
Rushing	90.1	116
Passing	242.6	50
Total	332.7	104
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	22.6	36
Rushing	162.7	69
Passing	177.8	12
Total	340.5	28
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
0	+0.0	T-59

10-YEAR WINNING TREND



RESULTS

5-7, 1-7

W	MONTANA	42-16
W	CINCINNATI	45-23
L	at Florida	23-33
W	BUFFALO	41-10
L	GEORGIA	12-20
L	LSU	7-38
L	at Alabama	6-37
L	SOUTH CAROLINA	3-14
W	MIDDLE TENNEESSE	24-0
L	at Arkansas	7-49
W	VANDERBILT (OT)	27-21
L	at Kentucky	7-10

PLAYER PROFILE

Justin Hunter
Photo by Jeremy Brevard/Icon SMI

'Gumby' Returns to Stretch Defenses

When receiver Justin Hunter tore his ACL early in Game 3 at Florida, Tennessee's offense was deflated.

The Vols' big-play threat was gone, and so was UT's upset chance.

"When you lose a good player like that," offensive coordinator Jim Chaney said, "it zaps you emotionally. I think that's what took place down there a little bit."

Not only did it impact the offense against Florida, it took its toll on the rest of the season. The Vols piled up 531 yards against nationally ranked Cincinnati, yet finished 10th in the SEC in scoring, ninth in total offense ... and managed just seven points in a pathetic performance against Kentucky.

But the acrobatic Hunter was back during the spring, well ahead of schedule. He even caught a 50-yard touchdown pass in a scrimmage while wearing a red, non-contact jersey.

"We call him Gumby," said receivers coach Darin Hinshaw, "because he can stretch and do some things not everybody can do. He's a big, long kid (6-4, 200) that can eat up grass with his long strides. It forces defensive backs to get on their heels. And he can cut and turn like a little guy.

"Because of his range and radius, you can throw the football in a lot of different places and he's going to get it."

Just ask Vols corner Prentiss Waggner, charged with guarding Hunter in practice.

"He's so shifty for being a tall guy," Waggner said. "You've got to be on your horse when you're covering him."

Chaney said Hunter, a 26-foot long jumper, has remarkable athletic ability.

"He can jump out of the gym and twist around in five different pretzels and catch it," Chaney said.

As a true freshman, Hunter caught 16 passes for 415 yards and seven touchdowns. He opened last season with two 100-yard games.

Hunter's quick recovery was evident in April.

"I did a lot more than I thought I'd be able to do," Hunter said. "I feel comfortable. At the same time, I think I have a lot more work to do on my knee. I was a little slower, but my agility was about the same."

due to his low trajectory.

Matt Darr averaged 38.1 yards per punt and Palardy, the backup, averaged 36.8. Darr's highlight was a 30-yard run after an errant snap. Palardy and Darr were ranked the nation's No. 1 kicker and punter, respectively, coming out of high school.

Sophomore Devrin Young gave the return units a spark last season, averaging 11.8 yards on eight punt returns with a long of 43 on his first runback. He averaged 23.3 yards on kick returns, but his production waned as the season progressed.

SCHEDULE ANALYSIS

Tennessee opens the season against ACC foe North Carolina State on Aug. 31 in the Chick-Fil-A Kickoff Classic in the Georgia Dome, where UT has lost five in a row (three SEC title games, two bowls). Then, the Vols face three weak non-conference foes — Georgia State (coached by Bill Curry), Akron and Troy.

The SEC schedule is more favorable than a year ago. The Vols replace LSU and Arkansas — two Top 10 teams — with Mississippi State and Missouri. Tennessee plays Florida and Alabama at home — and will charge an all-time high of $80 for those games only.

Eight opponents went to a bowl game — Alabama is the defending national champ, Georgia captured the East and South Carolina won 11 games for the first time ever.

— Jimmy Hyams

SCHEDULE

Date	Opponent	'11 Record
Aug. 31	vs. NC State (Atlanta, GA)	8-5
Sept. 8	GEORGIA STATE	3-8
Sept. 15	FLORIDA	7-6
Sept. 22	AKRON	1-11
Sept. 29	at Georgia	10-4
Oct. 13	at Mississippi State	7-6
Oct. 20	ALABAMA	12-1
Oct. 27	at South Carolina	11-2
Nov. 3	TROY	3-9
Nov. 10	MISSOURI	8-5
Nov. 17	at Vanderbilt	6-7
Nov. 24	KENTUCKY	5-7

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OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Kliff Kingsbury | **DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Mark Snyder** | **STADIUM: Kyle Field: 83,002**

AT A GLANCE

2011:
7-6, 4-5 Big 12 (T-6th)

COACH:
Kevin Sumlin — At Texas A&M: 1st year; overall: 35-17, 4 years

RETURNING STARTERS:
14; 8 offense, 5 defense, punter

PLAYERS TO WATCH:
WR Ryan Swope, WR Uzoma Nwachukwu, RB Christine Michael, OL Luke Joeckel, OL Jake Matthews, DE Damontre Moore, LB Sean Porter, LB Jonathan Stewart

PRIMARY STRENGTHS:
As long as the Aggies avoid any major injuries up front, the offensive line, led by bookend tackles Joeckel and Matthews and senior center Patrick Lewis, should provide plenty of holes for a strong running game and adequate time for a new starting quarterback. Defensively, Porter and Moore could be true difference-makers.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS:
A&M enters its first year in the SEC with a relatively thin defensive front and some significant holes to fill in the secondary. The Aggies also have an inexperienced quarterback and cannot afford many injuries anywhere, as there isn't much proven depth, even in areas that are team strengths, such as the offensive line.

KEY LOSSES:
QB Ryan Tannehill, RB Cyrus Gray, WR Jeff Fuller, DE Tony Jerod-Eddie, CB Coryell Judie, K Randy Bullock

OVERVIEW:
Texas A&M has a handful of personnel concerns and the first-year SEC schedule features every national title winner dating back to 2006 (Florida, LSU, Alabama and Auburn), so it's difficult to imagine the Aggies being consistent enough to be one of the top contenders in the SEC West. But this team certainly possesses enough offensive firepower to win seven or eight games and to be highly competitive with any team on its schedule.

No Dog Needed: Aggies Bring Firepower to SEC

Shortly after he was officially introduced in mid-December as Texas A&M's head coach, Kevin Sumlin accompanied his new team to Houston as the Aggies prepared for the Meineke Car Care Bowl.

Virtually everywhere he went during the pre-bowl game festivities, Sumlin was greeted by media and A&M fans who first congratulated him on the new job.

In their next breath, however, even the most well-meaning A&M fans inevitably warned Sumlin about how difficult it would be in 2012 when the Aggies began competing in the SEC. The engaging Sumlin answered so many questions about the SEC's dominance and difficulty that he finally uttered the line of the week, saying:

"I want to be around people who want to play at the highest level, want to compete in the best conference in America and the best division in America and, if you're scared of that, get a dog."

Months later, Sumlin explained he wasn't trying to be arrogant, flippant or condescending. But the former A&M assistant made it clear that he hasn't purchased a guard dog, a big dog or any sort of canine.

"I am excited about the SEC," Sumlin said with a laugh. "But I've not bought a dog. I guess that shows you I really am not scared. We're going in there with the intent of winning."

Skeptics may scoff at such bravado, especially with A&M coming off a 6-6 regular season and a 25-25 four-year run under Mike Sherman. But Sumlin and many other Aggies believe A&M can immediately be highly competitive in the SEC.

The Aggies were good enough last year to lead 12 of the 13 opponents they played by double digits. But they blew double-digit leads in five of the six losses, including back-to-back losses to Oklahoma State and Arkansas. Both of those teams finished in the top five in the final Associated Press poll last year, and A&M led both foes by at least 17 points.

"Our mission this year is to finish the games that we let slip away last season," A&M junior left tackle Luke Joeckel said.

"We realize a lot of people may look at our record from last year and write us off, but we look forward to the challenge. We've worked very hard to make sure we're in condition to finish games."

OFFENSE

Moving the football and lighting up the scoreboard were rarely problems last year, as the Aggies broke single-season school records for passing, total and scoring offense. A&M averaged 490.2 yards (seventh nationally) and scored 39.1 points per game.

And that was before the arrival of new coach Kevin Sumlin and offensive coordinator Kliff Kingsbury, who called the shots last year for a Houston team that led the nation in total offense by averaging 599.1 yards per game.

Kingsbury inherits a much different A&M offense with the loss of quarterback Ryan Tannehill and fellow 2012 NFL draft picks Cyrus Gray at running back and Jeff Fuller at wide receiver. Even with the departure of that talented trio, however, Kingsbury has plenty of weapons, beginning with what could be one of the most talented offensive lines in A&M history.

With All-America candidate Luke Joeckel at left tackle and Jake Matthews, the son of NFL Hall of Famer Bruce Matthews, at right tackle, the Aggies should be able to protect new quarterback Jameill Showers, who throws some of the prettiest passes with the tightest spirals that A&M has ever seen.

Damontre Moore
Photo by John Williamson

Showers isn't particularly big (6-2, 219), but he's comparable to Case Keenum (6-1, 208), who led the nation last year in total offensive yards per game (404.7) at Houston.

If Showers develops the pocket presence, poise and decision-making skills that made Keenum so effective, he could be sensational. In addition to a cannon-like arm, Showers is the strongest quarterback in A&M history in terms of his lower-body strength (he squatted 575 pounds as a freshman), and the construction science major is exceptionally bright.

A&M does not yet possess the overall depth of receiving talent that Houston utilized last year, but the Aggies feature a couple of proven playmakers in senior receivers Ryan Swope and Uzoma Nwachukwu. While A&M will often spread the field with four-receiver sets, it also will make use of versatile tight ends like Nehemiah Hicks, Michael Lamothe and Hutson Prioleau.

Kingsbury is a product of former Texas Tech head coach and Kentucky offensive coordinator Mike Leach, but the 32-year-old assistant says he will not necessarily mimic Leach's offenses or the one he had last year at Houston.

With the healthy return of outstanding senior running back Christine Michael, the addition of a couple of talented newcomers in the backfield and the overall strength of the offensive front, Kingsbury's first A&M offense could be far more balanced than outsiders might expect.

"My philosophy is to take what the defense gives you," the laid-back Kingsbury said. "If we need to run it 80 times a game to score points, we'll do that. If we need to throw it 80 times, we'll do that."

DEFENSE

Sumlin's biggest area of concern is the defensive front. Both A&M and UH utilized a three-man front last year, but for numerous reasons, Sumlin and defensive coordinator Mark Snyder have switched to a 4-3 defensive alignment for 2012 and beyond.

"We moved to a 3-4 at Houston because of recruiting and the league," said Sumlin, a college linebacker at Purdue.

"If you're playing a 4-3 (in Conference USA), you will be in a nickel all the time. Plus, it's just hard to recruit defensive linemen in C-USA. Here, moving from a 3-4 to a 4-3 is important because of how physical the SEC is and how important it is to stop the run. We can recruit D-linemen at A&M to play in the SEC."

While the Aggies are making strides in recruiting, the current depth chart is cause for concern, especially up front.

Junior end Damontre Moore is a talented pass-rusher who, along with big-hitting outside linebacker Sean Porter, played a major role in helping

Sean Porter
Photo by Doug Holleman

SCOUTING REPORT: Offense

POS	STARTER	YR.	COMMENT	BACKUP/KEY DEPTH
QB	Jameill Showers	So.	New QB features big-time arm and strength.	Johnny Manziel, Fr.
RB	Christine Michael*	Sr.	Averaged 99.9 yards per game before knee injury.	Trey Williams, Fr.
WR	Ryan Swope*	Sr.	Tough, tenacious leader of the receiving corps.	Malcome Kennedy, So.
WR	Uzoma Nwachukwu*	Sr.	Caught 50 passes in '11, and could double that in '12.	Brandal Jackson, Sr.
WR	Mike Evans	Fr.	Freshman with good hands and great size (6-5).	Nate Askew, Jr.
WR	Kenric McNeal	Sr.	Senior may finally thrive in this spread attack.	LeKendrick Williams, So.
LT	Luke Joeckel*	Jr.	Dominant blocker with first-round NFL potential.	Nathan Gutekunst, Fr.
LG	Jarvis Harrison*	So.	Came on strong as season progressed last year.	Shep Klinke, Jr.
C	Patrick Lewis*	Sr.	Tremendously strong, compact leader of OL.	Mike Matthews, Fr.
RG	Cedric Ogbuehi*	So.	Athletic lineman started final five games of 2011.	Ben Compton, So.
RT	Jake Matthews*	Jr.	Certainly living up to prestigious family name.	Germain Ifedi, Fr.
K	Taylor Bertolet	Fr.	No collegiate experience, but plenty of prep honors	Kyle Serres, Fr.

*Returning Starter

SCOUTING REPORT: Defense

POS	STARTER	YR.	COMMENT	BACKUP/KEY DEPTH
DE	Damontre Moore*	Jr.	Led the team last year with 17.5 tackles for loss.	Brandon Alexander, So.
DT	Kirby Ennis	Jr.	Played in all 13 games as a reserve last season.	Ivan Robinson, So.
DT	Jonathan Mathis	Sr.	Attempting to return from 2011 injury.	Shayvion Hatten, Fr.
DE	Spencer Nealy*	Sr.	Hard-nosed, tough, emotional leader of DL.	Gavin Stansbury, So.
LB	Sean Porter*	Sr.	Team leader with 9.5 sacks in 2011.	Charlie Thomas, Jr.
LB	Jonathan Stewart*	Sr.	Solid starter who led team with 98 tackles.	Shaun Ward, So.
LB	Steven Jenkins*	Jr.	One of the overall stars of 2012 spring.	Donnie Baggs, So.
CB	Deshazor Everett	So.	Valuable reserve last year shined in spring.	Dustin Harris, Sr.
CB	Floyd Raven	So.	Lock-down corner potential.	Tramain Jacobs, Jr.
SS	Howard Matthews	So.	Played well last season as a true freshman.	Clay Honeycutt, So.
FS	Steven Campbell	Sr.	Staying healthy is always a concern.	Steven Terrell, Sr.
P	Ryan Epperson*	Sr.	Solid punter must battle Kaser for starting role.	Drew Kaser, So.

*Returning Starter

AGGIES RECRUITING 2012

rivals.com

3 NEWCOMERS OF IMPACT

Trey Williams
Williams, who rushed for nearly 4,000 yards as a senior, was the prized signee for the Aggies in 2012. He's a five-star prospect and an explosive home run threat. The No. 3 recruit nationally at his position, Williams isn't very big, but he's extremely well-built, so his size doesn't appear to be a major issue.

Thomas Johnson
Johnson is an explosive receiver who gets down the field in a hurry, is shifty and does an excellent job making difficult receptions. This is an excellent route runner that is solidly built. Johnson, a top-50 national recruit, is strong enough to get off of jams and is particularly good after the catch.

Matt Davis
One of the country's most heavily recruited quarterbacks, Davis was a major score for the Aggies. He's a true dual-threat quarterback capable of winning games with his arm or his legs. Davis is an impressive overall athlete that rebounded exceptionally well from a knee injury in high school that caused him to miss a lot of action.

THE SLEEPER

Julien Obioha
Obioha is a big, athletic and quick defensive end with a nice upside. The Louisiana native flew under the radar a bit despite having over a dozen offers. Obioha is a versatile player who is likely to play with his hand on the ground some and as a standup defender whose primary objective is to rush the quarterback.

Committments	19
Average Stars	3.42
★★★★★	1
★★★★☆	6
★★★☆☆	12
★★☆☆☆	0
Total Stars	65
National Rank: 15	SEC: 5

2013 NEEDS: This is an easy call; it's the defensive line. Texas A&M has a major need there, primarily at defensive tackle, because of a few reasons. For starters, the Aggies are going from the 3-4 to the 4-3, so more players at that position are necessary. Also, one current key player is a senior and another is a junior, so the time is now to land their replacements. Look for the Aggies also to go heavy at defensive end. Additionally, the offensive line is another point of emphasis.

by Brian Perroni/Rivals.com

Name	Pos	Ht	Wt	Stars	Hometown	School
Matt Davis	QB	6-2	202	★★★★	Houston, TX	Klein Forest
Rivals250 selection...Rated as the No. 15 prospect in Texas...Rated as the nation's No. 3 dual-threat quarterback...Passed for 1,483 yards and 13 touchdowns and rushed for 931 yards and 12 scores as a senior...Enrolled at Texas A&M in January.						
DeVante Harris	DB	5-11	160	★★★★	Mesquite, TX	Horn
Rivals100 selection...Rated as the No. 10 prospect in Texas...Rated as the nation's No. 3 cornerback...Participated in the Under Armour All-American Game.						
Sabian Holmes	WR	5-11	175	★★★	Southlake, TX	Carroll
Caught 85 passes for 1,336 yards and 14 touchdowns as a senior...Chose Texas A&M over Arkansas State, Baylor, Memphis and Wyoming.						
Germain Ifedi	OL	6-5	304	★★★	Houston, TX	Westside
Rated as the No. 66 prospect in Texas by Rivals.com...Rated as the nation's No. 28 offensive guard...Participated in the Offense-Defense All-American Bowl.						
Otis Jacobs	DB	6-1	180	★★★	Perkinston, MS	Gulf Coast C.C.
Rated as the nation's No. 31 junior college prospect by Rivals.com...Chose Texas A&M over Tennessee...Enrolled at Texas A&M in January.						
Thomas Johnson	WR	6-0	180	★★★★	Dallas, TX	Skyline
Rivals100 selection...Rated as the No. 5 prospect in Texas...Rated as the nation's No. 4 wide receiver...Participated in the Under Armour All-American Game...Caught 59 passes for 1,077 yards and 13 touchdowns as a senior.						
Polo Manukainiu	DE	6-6	256	★★★	Euless, TX	Trinity
Rated as the No. 48 prospect in Texas by Rivals.com...Rated as the nation's No. 30 strongside defensive end...Chose Texas A&M over Baylor, UCLA, Utah and others.						
Kenneth Marshall	DB	6-0	191	★★★	South Houston, TX	South Houston
Rated as the No. 88 prospect in Texas by Rivals.com...Rated as the nation's No. 40 safety...Enrolled at Texas A&M in January.						
Mike Matthews	OL	6-3	260	★★★★	Missouri City, TX	Elkins
Rivals250 selection...Rated as the No. 19 prospect in Texas...Rated as the nation's No. 1 offensive center...Participated in the U.S. Army All-American Bowl...Son of NFL Hall of Famer Bruce Matthews.						
Julien Obioha	DE	6-4	255	★★★	New Orleans, LA	Brother Martin
Rated as the No. 26 prospect in Louisiana by Rivals.com...Chose Texas A&M over Nebraska, Mississippi State, Cal and others.						

Name	Pos	Ht	Wt	Stars	Hometown	School
Edward Pope	ATH	6-3	170	★★★★	Carthage, TX	Carthage
Rivals250 selection...Rated as the No. 28 prospect in Texas...Rated as the nation's No. 17 athlete...Participated in the U.S. Army All-American Bowl...Switched commitment to Texas A&M from TCU.						
Edmund Ray	DT	6-5	290	★★★	St. Louis, MO	Ritenour
Rated as the No. 9 prospect in Missouri by Rivals.com...Chose Texas A&M over Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Kansas State and Missouri.						
Michael Richardson	DE	6-2	228	★★★	DeSoto, TX	DeSoto
Rated as the No. 47 prospect in Texas by Rivals.com...Rated as the nation's No. 28 weakside defensive end...Participated in the Offense-Defense All-American Bowl.						
Jordan Richmond	LB	6-1	220	★★★★	Denton, TX	Ryan
Rated as the No. 33 prospect in Texas by Rivals.com...Rated as the nation's No. 26 outside linebacker...Chose Texas A&M over Arizona, Arkansas, Baylor and Stanford.						
Tyrone Taylor	DE	6-3	210	★★★	Galena Park, TX	Galena Park
Twin brother of Tyrell Taylor, who signed with Texas A&M in the 2011 class.						
Kimo Tipoti	OL	6-3	330	★★★	Hurst, TX	L. D. Bell
Rated as the No. 63 prospect in Texas by Rivals.com...Rated as the nation's No. 22 offensive guard...Participated in the Offense-Defense All-American Bowl.						
Derel Walker	WR	6-2	175	★★★	Athens, TX	Trinity Valley C.C.
Rated as the nation's No. 25 junior college prospect by Rivals.com...Had 37 receptions for 757 yards and 10 touchdowns in 2011...Enrolled at Texas A&M in January.						
Alonzo Williams	DE	6-4	248	★★★	Long Beach, CA	Poly
Rated as the No. 78 prospect in California by Rivals.com...Chose Texas A&M over Hawaii, UCLA and Washington.						
Trey Williams	RB	5-8	175	★★★★★	Spring, TX	Dekaney
Rivals100 selection...Rated as the No. 3 prospect in Texas...Rated as the nation's No. 3 running back...Participated in the U.S. Army All-American Bowl...Rushed for 3,890 yards and 48 touchdowns as a senior.						

AGGIES SPRING ROSTER

No.	Name	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.	Hometown
16	David Adame					
41	Brandon Alexander	DL	6-6	240	So.	Brenham
24	Travis Arthur	DB	6-0	165	Fr.	Houston
9	Nate Askew	WR	6-4	220	Jr.	San Antonio
36	Donnie Baggs	LB	6-1	225	So.	League City
43	Justin Bass	LB	6-2	205	So.	Plano
91	Taylor Bertolet	PLK	5-9	165	Fr.	Reading, PA
95	Ben Bredthauer	DS	6-4	250	Sr.	Houston
90	Justin Breshears	TE	6-2	225	Fr.	Aledo
26	Devonta Burns	DB	6-0	200	Fr.	Arlington
2	Steven Campbell	DB	6-0	201	Sr.	Houston
79	Joseph Cheek	OL	6-7	285	Fr.	Seguin
68	Ben Compton	OL	6-4	310	So.	Friendswood
6	Matt Davis	QB	6-2	202	Fr.	Houston
13	Aaron Eike	WR	6-3	175	Fr.	Bryan
42	Kirby Ennis	DL	6-4	286	Jr.	Huntsville
48	Ryan Epperson	P	6-2	191	Sr.	Keller
82	Mike Evans	WR	6-5	209	Fr.	Galveston
29	Deshazor Everett	DB	6-0	176	So.	DeRidder, LA
30	Johntel Franklin	DB	6-2	200	Jr.	Milwaukee, WI
63	Alex Freeman	DS	6-0	210	So.	Round Rock
19	Matt Fritsche	DB	6-3	180	Fr.	Bryan
6	Desmond Gardiner	DB	5-10	190	Jr.	Port Arthur
67	Tyler Godwin	DL	6-3	280	Fr.	Clear Springs
37	Garrett Graham	RB	5-10	212	So.	Mansfield
78	Garrett Gramling	OL	6-6	316	So.	Denton
60	Nathan Gutekunst	OL	6-6	320	Fr.	Humble
57	Dylan Guthrie	OL	6-3	280	So.	Houston
22	Dustin Harris	DB	6-0	175	Sr.	Livingston
51	Jarvis Harrison	OL	6-4	317	So.	Navasota
98	Shayvion Hatten	DL	6-4	286	Fr.	Daingerfield
81	Nehemiah Hicks	TE	6-4	249	Jr.	Hutto
25	Clay Honeycutt	DB	6-2	195	So.	Dickinson
4	Toney Hurd, Jr.	DB	5-9	180	Jr.	Missouri City
4	Brandal Jackson	WR	6-1	190	Sr.	Navasota
7	Tramain Jacobs	DB	6-1	180	Jr.	Covington, LA
45	Steven Jenkins	LB	6-2	220	Jr.	Pensacola, FL
76	Luke Joeckel	OL	6-6	310	Jr.	Arlington
16	Matt Joeckel	QB	6-4	234	So.	Arlington
58	Cody Johnson	LB	6-1	204	Fr.	Anahuac
20	C.J. Jones	DB	6-1	187	Sr.	Houston
42	Byron Jones-Campbell	RB	5-8	193	Jr.	Houston
38	Drew Kaser	P	6-3	220	So.	Strongsville, OH
84	Malcome Kennedy	WR	6-0	196	So.	Cayuga
77	Shep Klinke	OL	6-7	305	Jr.	Katy
15	Travis Labhart	WR	5-9	182	Jr.	Dallas
88	Gaston Lamascus	WR	5-6	182	Jr.	Navasota
19	Michael Lamothe	TE	6-3	232	Sr.	New Iberia, LA
61	Patrick Lewis	OL	6-2	306	Sr.	LaPlace, LA
23	Ben Malena	RB	5-8	195	Jr.	Cedar Hill
15	Johnny Manziel	QB	6-1	200	Fr.	Kerrville
15	Kenneth Marshall	DB	6-0	191	Fr.	South Houston
92	Jonathan Mathis	DL	6-2	293	Sr.	Houston
31	Howard Matthews	DB	6-2	206	So.	League City
75	Jake Matthews	OL	6-5	305	Jr.	Missouri City
5	Kenric McNeal	WR	6-1	184	Sr.	Spring
33	Christine Michael	RB	5-11	213	Sr.	Beaumont
44	Sam Moeller	WR	5-11	175	Fr.	San Antonio
94	Damontre Moore	DL	6-4	245	Jr.	Rowlett
99	Spencer Nealy	DL	6-5	277	Sr.	San Antonio
7	Uzoma Nwachukwu	WR	6-0	194	Sr.	Allen
70	Cedric Ogbuehi	OL	6-5	292	So.	Allen
50	Justin Ortega	OL	5-10	235	So.	San Antonio
27	Michael Osadebey	LB	6-1	208	Sr.	Grapevine
23	Domonique Patterson	LB	6-0	218	Jr.	Dallas
10	Sean Porter	LB	6-2	230	Sr.	Schertz
80	Hutson Prioleau	TE	6-4	251	Jr.	Fort Worth
34	Will Randolph	RB	5-9	188	So.	Copperas Cove
14	Floyd Raven	DB	6-2	187	So.	Kenner, LA
32	Rylan Riney	DB	5-11	168	Fr.	Aledo
89	Ivan Robinson	DL	6-3	270	So.	Longville, LA
47	Caleb Russell	DL	6-2	238	Sr.	Midlothian
46	Jake Russell	LB	6-2	225	Jr.	Sulphur Springs
73	Rhontae Scales	DL	6-6	317	Jr.	Killeen
3	Jameill Showers	QB	6-2	219	So.	Killeen
53	Caden Smith	OL	6-3	255	Fr.	Roscoe
72	Gavin Stansbury	DL	6-4	265	So.	Franklin, LA
11	Jonathan Stewart	LB	6-4	237	Sr.	Shreveport, LA
28	Louie Swope	DB	5-11	186	So.	Austin
25	Ryan Swope	WR	6-0	206	Sr.	Austin
35	Tyrell Taylor	LB	6-4	205	So.	Houston
21	Steven Terrell	DB	5-10	193	Sr.	Allen
9	Charlie Thomas	LB	6-1	220	Jr.	Beaumont
11	Derel Walker	WR	6-2	185	Jr.	Hillsboro
40	Shaun Ward	LB	6-2	240	So.	Ft. Lauderdale, FL
28	Brandon Williams	RB	6-0	192	So.	Brookshire
85	LeKendrick Williams	WR	5-8	170	So.	Sharpstown
59	Allen Woodum	OL	6-3	292	Sr.	Conroe

INDIVIDUAL STATS

PASSING

	GP	Effic	Cmp	Att	Int	Pct	Yards	TD	Long	Avg/G
R. Tannehill	13	133.2	327	531	15	61.6	3744	29	79	288.0
J. Showers	4	147.2	4	5	0	80.0	40	0	23	10.0

RECEIVING

	GP	No.	Yards	Avg	TD	Long	Avg/G
R. Swope	13	89	1207	13.6	11	79	92.8
J. Fuller	13	70	828	11.8	6	38	63.7
U. Nwachukwu	13	50	639	12.8	2	47	49.2

RUSHING

	GP	Att.	Gain	Loss	Net	Avg	TD	Long	Avg/G
C. Gray	11	198	1105	60	1045	5.3	12	63	95.0
C. Michael	9	149	920	21	899	6.0	8	48	99.9
R. Tannehill	13	58	355	49	306	5.3	4	65	23.5

DEF. LEADERS

Tackles: J. Stewart 98, T. Hunter 80, S. Porter 79
Tackles for loss: D. Moore 17.5, S. Porter 17, T. Frederick 9
Sacks: S. Porter 9.5, D. Moore 8.5, T. Jerod-Eddie 5
Interceptions: T. Hunter 2, S. Terrell 2, three tied with 1

NOTEBOOK

Perhaps the most impressive player on the A&M roster during spring drills might not be part of the Aggies' 2012 plans. **Brandon Williams**, a talented running back transfer from Oklahoma, dazzled coaches and teammates throughout the spring.

It wasn't necessarily a surprise, as Williams was a five-star recruit out of Brookshire Royal High School in the Houston area, where he rushed for 2,438 yards and 33 touchdowns as a senior in 2010. Williams played as a true freshman last year at Oklahoma, rushing for 219 yards on 46 carries before deciding to transfer closer to home to Texas A&M.

A&M will request a waiver on the transfer rule for Williams, but he will likely be required to sit out the 2012 season.

"The good thing about Brandon is he has three years of eligibility no matter what happens," coach **Kevin Sumlin** said. "They call him 'Slim' because he's about 190 pounds. When he gets to about 205 he'll be something else."

• A&M's once-promising season last year was undone by second-half collapses. To address that issue, Sumlin hired former A&M linebacker/defensive end **Larry Jackson** as the team's director of strength and conditioning.

Jackson, who worked previously with Sumlin at Houston, immediately made a major impression on the A&M players with his grueling workouts. And Jackson's workouts have paid dividends for Sumlin in the past.

En route to a 13-1 record last season, Houston ranked No. 1 nationally in points scored in the fourth quarter with 12.4 per game and ranked No. 6 in the nation in fewest points allowed in the fourth quarter at 3.6 per game. In other words, Sumlin's team was in shape to finish foes.

• This spring, Texas A&M's fundraising organization for athletics, the 12th Man Foundation, opened season ticket sales to the public.

In anticipation for the Aggies' SEC debut season, online shoppers bought up all the ticket inventory in about five to seven minutes. While excitement in Aggieland is at an all-time high, the sellouts for this season are a continuation of a trend for A&M.

In seven home games last year, Kyle Field was filled to 105.1 percent capacity, averaging 87,183 fans per game.

OPPOSING COACHES VIEW

• **On the transition to the SEC:** "Probably a better fit than most coming into the SEC with one exception — at this point it doesn't appear they're good enough on defense to be pounded three, four Saturdays in a row. What happens is, they'll wind up losing in Game 6 because games 4 and 5 were so physical."

• **On coach Kevin Sumlin:** "Kevin Sumlin is the guy Tennessee should have hired (after the 2009 season). He runs a very good offense and he's always had a good offensive coordinator. He has familiarity with Texas A&M. He was a split hire in A&M's camp. Half the school wanted him, half didn't. If they can unify behind him, he'll do a good job."

• **On A&M's personnel:** "A&M's got some talent. They've got two of the best offensive tackles in college football. They're phenomenal."

Christine Michael
Photo by Doug Holleman

the Aggies lead the Big 12 last year with 51 sacks — 11 more than Oklahoma and 21 more than any other team in the league.

Moore and Porter are undoubtedly cornerstones of the defense, and outside linebacker Steven Jenkins also has a chance to be an impact player.

But there are more questions than answers throughout the rest of the unit.

Senior end Spencer Nealy plays exceptionally hard, and senior tackle Jonathan Mathis could be a force on the interior if he returns fully from a knee injury that sidelined him throughout much of last year and the spring. For the most part, though, the Aggies will need major contributions from unproven youngsters like redshirt freshman Shayvion Hatten and sophomores Brandon Alexander and Gavin Stansbury.

With Porter and Jenkins on the outside and senior Jonathan Stewart in the middle, A&M features a solid linebacking crew, although there isn't much proven depth behind that trio.

Depth is also a concern in the secondary, especially at the safety positions. Senior free safety Steven Campbell is a big, physical presence with NFL skills, but his collegiate career has been marked by more injuries than impact plays. Sophomore Howard Matthews is also a physical, hard hitter, and senior Steven Terrell has been solid, but A&M could be one injury away from turning to youngsters like Clay Honeycutt or true freshman Edward Pope.

The only place on the defense where depth may not be a major concern is at cornerback, where youngsters Deshazor Everett and Floyd Raven have stepped up in a big way, and junior college transfer Tramain Jacobs was impressive during spring practices.

Additionally, the Aggies return some experienced corners in senior Dustin Harris and junior Toney Hurd Jr.

SPECIAL TEAMS

A&M will miss the dependability of consensus All-America placekicker and Lou Groza Award winner Randy Bullock, but the Aggies have high hopes for redshirt freshman Taylor Bertolet, rated the No. 1 kicker nationally by Rivals.com after his prep career in Pennsylvania.

Punter Ryan Epperson returns for his senior season after averaging 41.2 yards per kick, but he could be seriously

BEST & BRIGHTEST

MOST VALUABLE PLAYER

RB Christine Michael

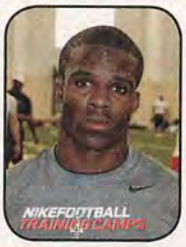
Possesses the heart of a warrior and is the epitome of toughness, as he has battled back from a torn ACL during last season and a broken leg as a sophomore. ... Powerful and explosive running style allows him to run over or around defenders. ... Big 12 Offensive Freshman of the Year in 2009 after leading team with 844 rushing yards and 10 TDs. ... Well on his way to a 1,000-yard rushing season last year before a knee injury against Oklahoma. Finished with 899 rushing yards and eight TDs.

EMERGING STAR

OL Luke Joeckel

Perhaps the best pro offensive line prospect at Texas A&M since Richmond Webb, who was selected in the first round of the 1990 NFL Draft by the Miami Dolphins and became first player in Miami history to play in the Pro Bowl each of his first seven seasons. ... Has started all 26 games at left tackle during his first two seasons at A&M ... Played a huge role in A&M allowing only nine sacks in 2011 (fourth-fewest in the country).

TOP NEWCOMER



RB Trey Williams

The true freshman could be a key part of 2012 offensive plans. ... Diminutive size at 5-8, 175, but has a tremendous burst and game-changing acceleration. ... Class 5A Player of the Year in Texas after rushing for a state-record 3,890 yards last season. ... Finished high school career with 8,110 rushing yards and 86 touchdowns. ... Outstanding open-field moves make him a great return specialist. ... Chose A&M over Alabama, Auburn, Arkansas and LSU.

2009 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	32.9	19
Rushing	184.2	30
Passing	281.6	16
Total	465.8	5
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	33.5	105
Rushing	171.6	90
Passing	254.7	106
Total	426.3	105
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
- 2	- 0.15	70

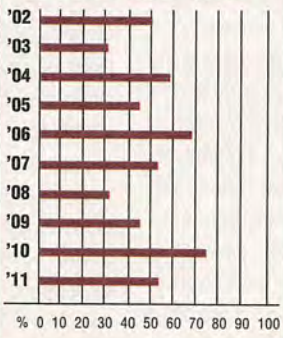
2010 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	31.2	34
Rushing	165.0	46
Passing	276.9	20
Total	441.9	23
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	21.9	34
Rushing	130.2	30
Passing	234.2	89
Total	364.3	55
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
- 5	- 0.38	80

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	39.1	11
Rushing	199.2	24
Passing	291.1	18
Total	490.2	7
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	28.2	70
Rushing	101.9	12
Passing	276.3	109
Total	378.2	59
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
- 9	- 0.69	106

10-YEAR WINNING TREND



RESULTS

7-6, 4-5

W	SMU	46-14
W	Idaho	37-7
L	Oklahoma State	29-30
L	at Arkansas	38-42
W	at Texas Tech	45-40
W	Baylor	55-28
W	at Iowa State	33-17
L	Missouri	31-38
L	at Oklahoma	25-41
L	at Kansas State (4OT)	50-53
W	Kansas	61-7
L	Texas	25-27
	Meineke Car Care Bowl	
W	vs. Northwestern	33-22

PLAYER PROFILE

Ryan Swope
Photo by Doug Holleman

Welker Look-Alike Likes New Offense

Last year, as Ryan Swope emerged as the most dependable Texas A&M receiver, many of his teammates began comparing him favorably to Patriots star Wes Welker, who in eight NFL seasons has been voted to four Pro Bowls.

The floppy-haired Swope, who led A&M with 89 catches for 1,207 yards and 11 touchdowns last season, was tremendously flattered by the comparisons to Welker.

"To be compared to one of the greatest receivers in the game today is a great honor," Swope said. "He's a hustler and is all over the field. He really gets down and dirty. I love the way he plays, and I try to be a lot like him."

What Swope didn't initially realize is that Welker was an "Aggie killer" before becoming an NFL star. For many A&M fans, the mere mention of Welker's name still causes eyes to roll regrettably.

Perhaps only stomach acid generated more heartburn at Kyle Field than Welker, the former Texas Tech star who caught 259 passes, including 21 for touchdowns, with the Red Raiders from 2000-03. Most of those scores came against the Aggies. Or so it seemed.

Ironically, the quarterback at Tech who first helped turn Welker into a star was Kliff Kingsbury, who is now Swope's offensive coordinator at A&M. And as good as Swope has been recently — he's made 161 catches the last two seasons — the senior could be even better in Kingsbury's prolific spread attack.

"This offense is a lot of fun," Swope said during spring practices. "It's an up-tempo, fast-paced style, and I'm really excited about playing a big role in what we do in the passing game."

There's little doubt that Swope will be a favorite target for new quarterback Jameill Showers. After all, Showers has been around the A&M program long enough to know that Swope is Mr. Dependable in the passing game. But pass-catching productivity is just part of Swope's value to the Aggies.

While he's not a rah-rah type of leader, he leads by example. Swope plays receiver with a safety's mentality, hurdling defenders and hurling his body recklessly toward first-down markers and goal lines.

He's as sleek as a sports car but as ruggedly tough as a half-ton pickup. He can go long or across the middle with equal productivity. He can juke defenders out of their shoes or take a ferocious hit and hang onto the football ... just like Welker.

pushed by sophomore Drew Kaser, who has the more powerful leg.

A&M has plenty of outstanding return options, led by Dustin Harris, who narrowly missed breaking Aaron Glenn's single-season school punt return average record. Harris averaged 18.6 yards per punt return to lead the nation.

The senior is also an extremely dangerous kickoff return specialist, but A&M also could utilize Kenric McNeal or Tramain Jacobs, who was a dangerous return specialist at Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College.

SCHEDULE ANALYSIS

On the one hand, the Aggies' schedule is absolutely brutal, as A&M faces every national title winner since 2006 (Florida, LSU, Alabama and Auburn) and plays three consecutive SEC road games in late October and early November.

On the other hand, if the Aggies can take care of business in non-conference play (Louisiana Tech, SMU, South Carolina State and Sam Houston State), this is a manageable slate to earn a bowl bid.

The SEC purposely made the Aggies' home debut in the new league a big game, as Florida comes to Kyle Field on Sept. 8. And, while there is never a great time to face defending national title winner Alabama, the Aggies travel to Tuscaloosa one week after the Tide's title rematch with LSU and two weeks prior to the Iron Bowl with Auburn.

— Rusty Burson

SCHEDULE

Date	Opponent	'11 Record
Aug. 30	at Louisiana Tech	8-5
Sept. 8	FLORIDA	7-6
Sept. 15	at SMU	8-5
Sept. 22	SOUTH CAROLINA STATE	7-4
Sept. 29	ARKANSAS	11-2
Oct. 6	at Ole Miss	2-10
Oct. 20	LSU	13-1
Oct. 27	at Auburn	8-5
Nov. 3	at Mississippi State	7-6
Nov. 10	at Alabama	12-1
Nov. 17	SAM HOUSTON STATE	14-1
Nov. 24	MISSOURI	8-5

2011 SEC LEADERS

INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS

PASS EFFICIENCY	G	CMP	ATT	INT	PCT.	YDS	TD	EFFIC.
1. Jarrett Lee, LSU	13	104	167	3	62.3	1306	14	152.0
2. Tyler Wilson, Arkansas	13	277	438	6	63.2	3638	24	148.4
3. Connor Shaw, South Carolina	10	123	188	6	65.4	1448	14	148.3
4. AJ McCarron, Alabama	13	219	328	5	66.8	2634	16	147.3
5. Aaron Murray, Georgia	14	238	403	14	59.1	3149	35	146.4
6. John Brantley, Florida	11	144	240	7	60.0	2044	11	140.8
7. Clint Moseley, Auburn	10	66	108	3	61.1	800	5	133.1
8. Chris Relf, Mississippi State	11	114	190	9	60.0	1212	10	121.5
9. Randall Mackey, Ole Miss	9	77	155	5	49.7	1112	7	118.4
10. Jordan Rodgers, Vanderbilt	13	108	216	10	50.0	1524	9	113.8

INTERCEPTIONS	G	NO.	YDS	TD	LONG	AVG/G
1. Bacarri Rambo, Georgia	13	8	157	1	51	0.62
2. Casey Hayward, Vanderbilt	13	7	107	1	50	0.54
3. Morris Claiborne, LSU	14	6	173	1	89	0.43
4. Tramain Thomas, Arkansas	13	5	70	0	29	0.38
Johnthan Banks, Mississippi State	13	5	27	1	27	0.38
6. Charles Sawyer, Ole Miss	12	4	101	1	96	0.33
Danny Trevathan, Kentucky	12	4	73	0	28	0.33
Austin Johnson, Tennessee	12	4	49	0	22	0.33
9. Stephon Gilmore, South Carolina	13	4	-10	0	3	0.31
10. Shawn Williams, Georgia	14	4	58	0	45	0.29

RUSHING	G	ATT.	YDS	AVG.	TD	AVG/G
1. Trent Richardson, Alabama	13	283	1679	5.9	21	129.2
2. Michael Dyer, Auburn	12	242	1242	5.1	10	103.5
3. Zac Stacy, Vanderbilt	13	201	1193	5.9	14	91.8
4. Vick Ballard, Mississippi State	13	193	1189	6.2	10	91.5
5. Chris Rainey, Florida	12	171	861	5.0	2	71.8
6. Isaiah Crowell, Georgia	12	185	850	4.6	5	70.8
7. Dennis Johnson, Arkansas	11	106	670	6.3	3	60.9
8. Tauren Poole, Tennessee	12	187	693	3.7	5	57.8
9. Eddie Lacy, Alabama	12	95	674	7.1	7	56.2
10. Jeff Demps, Florida	10	87	547	6.3	6	54.7

SCORING	G	TD	FG	XPT	2XP	PTS	PTS/G
1. Trent Richardson, Alabama	13	24	0	0	0	144	11.1
2. Zach Hocker, Arkansas	13	0	21	55	0	118	9.1
3. Jeremy Shelley, Alabama	13	0	21	52	0	115	8.8
4. Drew Alleman, LSU	13	0	16	62	0	110	8.5
5. Caleb Sturgis, Florida	12	0	22	31	0	97	8.1
6. Blair Walsh, Georgia	14	0	21	46	0	109	7.8
7. Zac Stacy, Vanderbilt	13	14	0	0	0	84	6.5
8. Jarius Wright, Arkansas	12	12	0	0	2	74	6.2
9. Cody Parkey, Auburn	13	0	13	41	0	80	6.2
10. Derek DePasquale, Mississippi State	13	0	12	36	0	72	5.5

TOTAL OFFENSE	G	RUSH	PASS	PLAYS	TOT	YDS/G
1. Tyler Wilson, Arkansas	13	-3	3638	498	3635	279.6
2. Aaron Murray, Georgia	14	111	3149	490	3260	232.9
3. AJ McCarron, Alabama	13	-22	2634	358	2612	200.9
4. Connor Shaw, South Carolina	10	525	1448	323	1973	197.3
5. John Brantley, Florida	11	-120	2044	265	1924	174.9
6. Jordan Rodgers, Vanderbilt	13	420	1524	333	1944	149.5
7. Chris Relf, Mississippi State	11	375	1212	313	1587	144.3
8. Randall Mackey, Ole Miss	9	180	1112	238	1292	143.6
9. Trent Richardson, Alabama	13	1679	0	283	1679	129.2
10. Morgan Newton, Kentucky	10	272	793	252	1065	106.5

PUNTING	G	NO.	YDS	LG	AVG.
1. Dylan Breeding, Arkansas	13	53	2400	70	45.3
2. Brad Wing, LSU	12	59	2618	73	44.4
3. Drew Butler, Georgia	14	58	2566	62	44.2
4. Ryan Tydlacka, Kentucky	12	79	3448	64	43.6
5. Tyler Campbell, Ole Miss	12	72	3137	73	43.6
6. Richard Kent, Vanderbilt	13	64	2719	67	42.5
7. Baker Swedenburg, Mississippi State	13	71	2970	58	41.8
8. Steven Clark, Auburn	13	72	2941	58	40.8
9. Cody Mandell, Alabama	12	39	1534	52	39.3
10. Joey Scribner-Howard, South Carolina	12	52	2025	60	38.9

RECEIVING YDS/GAME	G	REC.	YDS	TD	AVG/G
1. Jarius Wright, Arkansas	12	66	1117	12	93.1
2. Da'Rick Rogers, Tennessee	12	67	1040	9	86.7
3. Rueben Randle, LSU	14	53	917	8	65.5
4. Malcolm Mitchell, Georgia	11	45	665	4	60.5
5. Jordan Matthews, Vanderbilt	13	41	778	5	59.8
6. Alshon Jeffery, South Carolina	13	49	762	8	58.6
7. Emory Blake, Auburn	11	36	613	5	55.7
8. Tavarres King, Georgia	14	47	705	8	50.4
9. Joe Adams, Arkansas	13	54	652	3	50.2
10. La'Rod King, Kentucky	12	40	598	7	49.8

TEAM STATISTICS

TOTAL OFFENSE	G	PLAYS	YDS	AVG/P	TD	AVG/G
1. Arkansas	13	883	5695	6.4	51	438.1
2. Alabama	13	865	5585	6.5	50	429.6
3. Georgia	14	1016	5719	5.6	52	408.5
4. South Carolina	13	870	4856	5.6	47	373.5
5. Mississippi State	13	862	4643	5.4	38	357.2
6. LSU	14	870	4971	5.7	56	355.1
7. Vanderbilt	13	843	4408	5.2	41	339.1
8. Auburn	13	828	4392	5.3	37	337.8
9. Tennessee	12	792	3992	5.0	29	332.7
10. Florida	13	789	4273	5.4	30	328.7
11. Ole Miss	12	773	3375	4.4	21	281.2
12. Kentucky	12	764	3117	4.1	21	259.8

TOTAL DEFENSE	G	PLAYS	YDS	AVG/P	TD	AVG/G
1. Alabama	13	720	2387	3.3	9	183.6
2. LSU	14	897	3661	4.1	14	261.5
3. South Carolina	13	835	3480	4.2	26	267.7
4. Georgia	14	870	3881	4.5	28	277.2
5. Florida	13	848	3894	4.6	31	299.5
6. Vanderbilt	13	871	4196	4.8	28	322.8
7. Tennessee	12	752	4086	5.4	31	340.5
8. Mississippi State	13	970	4558	4.7	27	350.6
9. Arkansas	13	912	4717	5.2	33	362.8
10. Kentucky	12	829	4524	5.5	33	377.0
11. Auburn	13	926	5304	5.7	42	408.0
12. Ole Miss	12	806	5032	6.2	43	419.3

KICKOFF RETURNS	G	NO	YDS	TD	AVG.
1. Auburn	13	55	1356	2	24.7
2. Florida	13	47	1137	2	24.2
3. Alabama	13	22	530	0	24.1
4. Arkansas	13	42	974	2	23.2
5. Tennessee	12	43	976	0	22.7
6. Vanderbilt	13	54	1184	1	21.9
7. South Carolina	13	37	808	0	21.8
8. LSU	14	38	828	1	21.8
9. Georgia	14	48	1035	0	21.6
10. Ole Miss	12	56	1147	0	20.5
11. Kentucky	12	47	952	0	20.3
12. Mississippi State	13	42	779	0	18.5

SCORING OFFENSE	G	TD	FG	XPT	2XP	DXP	SAF	PTS	AVG
1. Arkansas	13	59	21	55	2	0	1	478	36.8
2. LSU	14	65	16	62	0	0	0	500	35.7
3. Alabama	13	55	23	52	1	0	0	453	34.8
4. Georgia	14	54	22	52	2	0	1	448	32.0
5. South Carolina	13	53	7	50	0	1	0	391	30.1
6. Vanderbilt	13	46	8	45	0	0	1	347	26.7
7. Auburn	13	42	13	41	0	0	1	334	25.7
8. Florida	13	37	24	33	1	0	1	331	25.5
9. Mississippi State	13	42	12	39	0	0	1	329	25.3
10. Tennessee	12	31	10	28	0	0	0	244	20.3
11. Ole Miss	12	24	9	20	1	0	0	193	16.1
12. Kentucky	12	22	12	20	1	0	0	190	15.8

SCORING DEFENSE	G	TD	FG	XPT	2XP	DXP	SAF	PTS	AVG
1. Alabama	13	12	7	11	1	0	0	106	8.2
2. LSU	14	15	17	13	1	0	1	158	11.3
3. South Carolina	13	27	17	22	1	0	1	239	18.4
4. Mississippi State	13	28	20	28	0	0	0	256	19.7
5. Florida	13	33	11	31	0	0	1	264	20.3
6. Georgia	14	37	11	31	1	0	0	288	20.6
7. Vanderbilt	13	35	12	27	4	0	0	281	21.6
8. Arkansas	13	38	7	38	0	1	0	289	22.2
9. Tennessee	12	33	13	32	0	0	1	271	22.6
10. Kentucky	12	36	15	35	0	0	0	296	24.7
11. Auburn	13	46	18	42	2	0	0	376	28.9
12. Ole Miss	12	49	13	48	0	0	2	385	32.1

PUNT RETURN AVG	G	NO	YDS	TD	AVG.
1. Ole Miss	12	14	219	2	15.6
2. Arkansas	13	31	420	4	13.5
3. LSU	14	39	524	2	13.4
4. Alabama	13	39	507	1	13.0
5. Mississippi State	13	28	311	2	11.1
6. Georgia	14	26	259	1	10.0
7. Tennessee	12	16	130	0	8.1
8. South Carolina	13	20	156	1	7.8
9. Florida	13	25	178	2	7.1
10. Auburn	13	23	155	0	6.7
11. Vanderbilt	13	27	171	0	6.3
12. Kentucky	12	19	35	0	1.8

RUSHING OFFENSE	G	ATT	YDS	AVG.	TD	YDS/G
1. Alabama	13	508	2788	5.5	34	214.5
2. LSU	14	591	2836	4.8	35	202.6
3. South Carolina	13	553	2497	4.5	28	192.1
4. Auburn	13	536	2370	4.4	20	182.3
5. Mississippi State	13	513	2279	4.4	19	175.3
6. Vanderbilt	13	497	2138	4.3	26	164.5
7. Georgia	14	582	2296	3.9	15	164.0
8. Florida	13	469	1859	4.0	17	143.0
9. Arkansas	13	412	1786	4.3	25	137.4
10. Ole Miss	12	460	1555	3.4	12	129.6
11. Kentucky	12	428	1490	3.5	9	124.2
12. Tennessee	12	392	1081	2.8	11	90.1

RUSHING DEFENSE	G	ATT	YARDS	AVG.	TD	YDS/G
1. Alabama	13	386	938	2.4	3	72.2
2. LSU	14	460	1261	2.7	7	90.1
3. Georgia	14	440	1417	3.2	16	101.2
4. Vanderbilt	13	473	1697	3.6	12	130.5
5. Florida	13	507	1725	3.4	16	132.7
6. South Carolina	13	489	1768	3.6	12	136.0
7. Mississippi State	13	536	1995	3.7	15	153.5
8. Tennessee	12	445	1952	4.4	17	162.7
9. Arkansas	13	505	2179	4.3	21	167.6
10. Kentucky	12	487	2198	4.5	14	183.2
11. Auburn	13	531	2460	4.6	19	189.2
12. Ole Miss	12	500	2699	5.4	26	224.9

PUNTING	G	NO	YDS	AVG/P	RET	AVG	TB	NET/P
1. LSU	14	66	2909	44.1	73	1.1	6	41.2
2. Kentucky	12	80	3459	43.2	153	1.9	7	39.6
3. Vanderbilt	13	68	2837	41.7	89	1.3	4	39.2
4. Auburn	13	73	2980	40.8	62	0.8	3	39.2
5. Ole Miss	12	72	3137	43.6	219	3.0	7	38.6
6. Mississippi State	13	71	2970	41.8	119	1.7	8	37.9
7. Arkansas	13	53	2400	45.3	349	6.6	3	37.6
8. Florida	13	57	2267	39.8	99	1.7	2	37.3
9. Alabama	13	39	1534	39.3	51	1.3	3	36.5
10. Georgia	14	59	2566	43.5	373	6.3	4	35.8
11. South Carolina	13	53	2025	38.2	110	2.1	3	35.0
12. Tennessee	12	54	2040	37.8	143	2.6	2	34.4

PASS OFFENSE	G	COMP	ATT	INT	PCT.	YDS	AVG.	TD	AVG/G
1. Arkansas	13	299	471	7	63.5	3909	8.3	26	300.7
2. Georgia	14	257	434	14	59.2	3423	7.9	37	244.5
3. Tennessee	12	223	400	12	55.8	2911	7.3	18	242.6
4. Alabama	13	237	357	8	66.4	2797	7.8	16	215.2
5. Florida	13	182	320	13	56.9	2414	7.5	13	185.7
6. Mississippi State	13	198	349	13	56.7	2364	6.8	19	181.8
7. South Carolina	13	191	317	15	60.3	2359	7.4	19	181.5
8. Vanderbilt	13	179	346	18	51.7	2270	6.6	15	174.6
9. Auburn	13	164	292	13	56.2	2022	6.9	17	155.5
10. LSU	14	173	279	5	62.0	2135	7.7	21	152.5
11. Ole Miss	12	155	313	13	49.5	1820	5.8	9	151.7
12. Kentucky	12	171	336	12	50.9	1627	4.8	12	135.6

PASS DEFENSE	G	COMP	ATT	INT	PCT.	YDS	AVG.	TD	AVG/G
1. Alabama	13	164	334	13	49.1	1449	4.3	6	111.5
2. South Carolina	13	174	346	19	50.3	1712	4.9	14	131.7
3. Florida	13	186	341	8	54.5	2169	6.4	15	166.8
4. LSU	14	229	437	18	52.4	2400	5.5	7	171.4
5. Georgia	14	218	430	20	50.7	2464	5.7	12	176.0
6. Tennessee	12	178	307	9	58.0	2134	7.0	14	177.8
7. Vanderbilt	13	216	398	19	54.3	2499	6.3	16	192.2
8. Kentucky	12	175	342	15	51.2	2326	6.8	19	193.8
9. Ole Miss	12	187	306	10	61.1	2333	7.6	17	194.4
10. Arkansas	13	232	407	12	57.0	2538	6.2	12	195.2
11. Mississippi State	13	280	434	12	64.5	2563	5.9	12	197.2
12. Auburn	13	250	395	11	63.3	2844	7.2	23	218.8

TURNOVER MARGIN	G	+FUM	+INT	TOT	FUM	-INT	-TOT	-MAR
1. LSU	14	12	18	30	5	5	10	+20
2. Alabama	13	7	13	20	4	8	12	+8
3. Georgia	14	12	20	32	11	14	25	+7
4. South Carolina	13	13	19	32	12	15	27	+5
5. Auburn	13	12	11	23	8	13	21	+2
6. Kentucky	12	10	15	25	12	12	24	+1
7. Vanderbilt	13	10	19	29	10	18	28	+1
Arkansas	13	9	12	21	13	7	20	+1
9. Tennessee	12	9	9	18	6	12	18	+0
Mississippi State	13	8	12	20	7	13	20	+0
11. Ole Miss	12	7	10	17	12	13	25	-8
12. Florida	13	6	8	14	13	13	26	-12

VANDERBILT COMMODORES

For more coverage of the Commodores, visit vanderbilt.rivals.com

OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: John Donovan | **DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Bob Shoop** | **STADIUM: Vanderbilt Stadium: 39,773**

AT A GLANCE

2011:
6-7, 2-6 SEC (T-4th, East)

COACH:
James Franklin — At Vanderbilt and overall: 6-7, 1 year

RETURNING STARTERS:
18; 9 offense, 7 defense, punter, kicker

PLAYERS TO WATCH:
QB Jordan Rodgers, RB Zac Stacy, WR Jordan Matthews, WR Chris Boyd, DT Rob Lohr, LB Chase Garnham, LB Archibald Barnes, CB Trey Wilson

PRIMARY STRENGTHS:
The Commodores will pound the ball early as the passing game develops. Stacy is the school's single-season rushing leader; Warren Norman is hopeful for a big comeback year after knee injuries held him out in 2011. Speedy four-star recruit Brian Kimbrow also could make an impact. Most of the defensive line returns, headed by Lohr.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS:
Depth at offensive line is again a major concern. Four starters return, but one — LG Ryan Seymour — missed all of spring drills. Garnham has big shoes to fill at middle linebacker with the departure of Chris Marve. Two starters are gone from a secondary that picked off 19 passes in 2011.

KEY LOSSES:
TE Brandon Barden, OT Kyle Fischer, LB Chris Marve, DE Tim Fugger, CB Casey Hayward, SS Sean Richardson

OVERVIEW:
Finishing the close games is the focus in Franklin's second year. Vanderbilt lost four SEC games by a combined 19 points. Defense figures to be the backbone again, despite losing four huge playmakers. If the passing game evolves to balance out a strong backfield, Vanderbilt will be bowling for consecutive years for the first time in school history.

Defense, Run Game Help Commodores Forget Past

Last fall, James Franklin emphasized the days of the "Same Old Vanderbilt" were dead and gone.

The product on the field mostly backed up the first-year head coach.

For the first time in a long time, the Commodores were in every game, the lone exception being a 34-0 blowout loss to eventual national champion Alabama. Vanderbilt surpassed its win total of the previous two years by the third game and reached a bowl game for just the second time since 1982.

But in many ways, the Commodores still have a long way to go before they can shake that perception of being an SEC doormat.

"Although we have competed and done some nice things, my expectation is we are going to take it to the next level," Franklin said. "I really feel like the next step we have to take as a program is going to be a more difficult step."

That starts with winning close games.

Vanderbilt lost to Cincinnati by a touchdown in the Liberty Bowl and dropped four SEC games by a combined 19 points. The Commodores were an ill-timed fumble and missed field goal away from knocking off then-No. 8 Arkansas.

Only one of the six teams the Commodores beat reached a bowl, and a signature SEC win eluded Franklin as Vanderbilt only defeated Ole Miss and Kentucky — teams with a combined league record of 2-14.

"I think the transformation we made last year was a dramatic one," Franklin said.

"Going from — no disrespect to anybody — not a very good football team to an OK football team and taking that next step from going OK to good and good to great, it's going to be a much more difficult task."

Still, the Commodores raised eyebrows in and outside of Nashville with their fiery young coach, a new style of offense that actually found the end zone and a defense that ranked in the top 20 nationally. In February, Franklin locked up the school's highest-rated signing class, headlined by Brian Kimbrow, who was listed as the nation's fourth-best running back by Rivals.com.

While there is plenty left to prove, the days of "Same Old Vanderbilt" appear to be over.

"I feel like we are going to come out here and we're not just going to get punched in the mouth," junior wide receiver Jordan Matthews said. "We believe in Coach Franklin and what he is doing."

OFFENSE

The Commodores have a proven rushing threat in Zac Stacy. They hope a developing passing game will complement the senior running back and keep opposing defenses from packing the box.

Passes amounted to more than 70 percent of the offense in 11-on-11 drills during spring workouts and in the spring game.

Senior Jordan Rodgers enters fall camp as the obvious frontrunner at quarterback. He grabbed the reins from Larry Smith midway through last season and started the last seven games.

Wyoming transfer Austyn Carta-Samuels is battling Rodgers. The former Mountain West Conference Freshman of the Year possesses a stronger arm than Rodgers and is also a threat with his feet. But the junior hasn't played since 2010 and admitted there was a learning curve to Franklin's multiple-set offense.

"I'm interested to see how this quarterback thing is going to play out once Carta-Samuels has a better feel and he can compete come summer camp," Franklin said. "There are going to be

Zac Stacy
Photo by Grant Halverson/Getty Images

times in this league you are not going to be able to run the ball and you're going to have to throw for a high percentage. That is going to have to be an emphasis all summer."

Wide receivers Jordan Matthews and Chris Boyd return after breakout seasons. After a sluggish first five games, the 6-3, 205-pound Matthews exploded over the second half to finish with 41 catches for 778 yards — the most receiving yards at Vanderbilt since 2007. Boyd, at 6-4, 205, led the receivers with eight touchdowns.

Two former quarterbacks hope position switches get them on the field more often. Josh Grady could start at slot receiver and is also an option out of the Wildcat formation. Fellow redshirt freshman Kris Kentera is an athletic 6-4, 218-pounder who runs routes well and will challenge Fitz Lassing at H-back.

The biggest asset early will be the running game.

Stacy is the SEC's top returning rusher after running for a school single-season record 1,193 yards and scoring 14 touchdowns.

"It was awesome," left tackle Wesley Johnson said. "We went back and watched tape and we realized how well he actually ran. A lot of it wasn't us opening up holes, it was him making holes."

In addition to Stacy, former SEC Freshman of the Year Warren Norman is expected to return after a knee injury kept him out. Jerron Seymour, Wesley Tate and incoming freshman Brian Kimbrow will also get carries.

Once again, the key for Vanderbilt is offensive line depth. Although center Logan Stewart was dismissed from the team, four starters return. But only eight linemen played in the spring game.

"Those boys worked harder than anybody this spring," Rodgers said.

DEFENSE

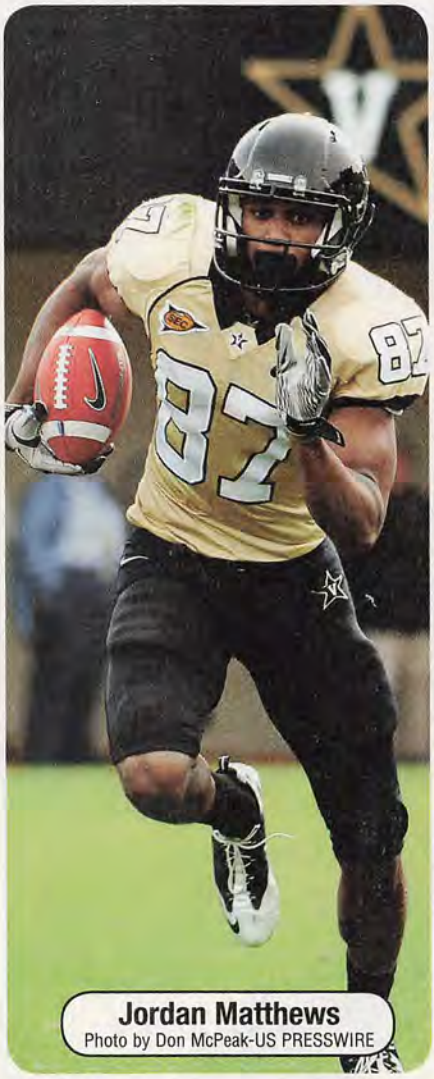
The defense flourished in coordinator Bob Shoop's 4-3 scheme that emphasized getting off the line of scrimmage fast up front and jumping routes and taking chances in the secondary.

Can the unit do the same in 2012 despite the loss of four key starters?

Franklin and Shoop hope so, especially since most of the players stepping in have valuable experience, thanks to a rotating defense.

The biggest question mark is at linebacker, with Chris Marve gone after tying for ninth in career tackles (397) at the school. Archibald Barnes returns as the top returning tackler (59) after he replaced Tristan Strong, who missed half of 2011 and spring workouts but is hopeful to be back in the fall. Barnes started nine games, forced three fumbles and snagged two interceptions.

Soft-spoken Chase Garnham is being forced to move outside of his comfort



Jordan Matthews
Photo by Don McPeak-US PRESSWIRE

SCOUTING REPORT: Offense

POS	STARTER	YR.	COMMENT	BACKUP/KEY DEPTH
QB	Jordan Rodgers*	Sr.	Dual-threat QB focusing on accuracy with short passes.	Austyn Carta-Samuels, Jr.
RB	Zac Stacy*	Sr.	Broke school single-season rushing record in 2011.	Warren Norman, Jr.
HB	Fitz Lassing*	Jr.	Good blocker with good hands out of backfield.	Kris Kentera, Fr.
WR	Jordan Matthews*	Jr.	Had three 100-yard receiving games.	Jonathan Krause, Jr.
WR	Chris Boyd*	So.	Led team with eight touchdowns last season.	Josh Grady, Fr.
TE	Austin Monahan	Sr.	Oft-injured sixth-year player had just three catches in 2011.	Steven Scheu, Fr.
LT	Wesley Johnson*	Jr.	Played all three line positions in 2011.	James Lewis, Fr.
LG	Ryan Seymour*	Sr.	Versatile lineman played at center in spring.	Joe Townsend, So.
C	Spencer Pulley	So.	Former tackle; only lineman without starting experience.	Wesley Johnson, Jr.
RG	Josh Jelesky*	Sr.	Former DT started in last five games.	Jake Bernstein, Fr.
RT	Andrew Bridges*	So.	Provided relief to injury-depleted line.	Chase White, So.
K	Ryan Fowler*	Sr.	Lost his job in fall camp only to regain it by season's end.	Carey Spear, Jr.

*Returning Starter

SCOUTING REPORT: Defense

POS	STARTER	YR.	COMMENT	BACKUP/KEY DEPTH
DE	Walker May*	Jr.	Wiry edge rusher will be leaned upon more.	Thad McHaney, Jr.
DT	Colt Nichter*	Sr.	Started 2011 strong before losing job in final four games.	Barron Dixon, So.
DT	Rob Lohr*	Sr.	Most experienced lineman had 11.5 tackles for loss.	Jared Morse, Jr.
DE	Johnell Thomas	Sr.	Powerful but has battled inconsistency.	Kyle Woestmann, So.
LB	Archibald Barnes*	Sr.	Team's top returning tackler is aggressive and physical.	Darreon Herring, Fr.
LB	Chase Garnham*	Jr.	Must be more vocal moving into middle.	Kellen Williams, Fr.
LB	Karl Butler	Jr.	Former DB who can play nickel spot as well.	Tristan Strong, Sr.
CB	Trey Wilson*	Sr.	Returned two interceptions for touchdowns.	Eddie Foster, Sr.
CB	Andre Hal	Jr.	Impressive spring puts him in front of crowded competition.	Steven Clarke, Jr.
SS	Javon Marshall*	Jr.	Missed all of spring due to an injury.	Andrew Williamson, Fr.
FS	Kenny Ladler	Jr.	Reliable player with 15 starts under his belt.	Eric Samuels, Sr.
P	Richard Kent*	Sr.	More than a third of his punts landed inside the 20.	Ryan Fowler, Sr.

*Returning Starter

COMMODORES RECRUITING 2012 rivals.com

3 NEWCOMERS OF IMPACT

Brian Kimbrow
The highest-rated player in the Vanderbilt class, Kimbrow's pledge was a major momentum boost for the Commodores on the recruiting trail and made other prospects take notice of the program. While he isn't very big, Kimbrow is a determined competitor with a ton of heart and the strong desire to put this program on the map. He's also very fast.

Caleb Azubike
A defensive end standing 6-5, Azubike could be the player in this Vanderbilt class with the highest ceiling. He produced 14 sacks and 53 tackles for loss during his senior campaign. He's a big, strong, physical end who ultimately could play in the 275-pound range. Azubike has a chance to hit the field early in Nashville.

Andrew Jelks
A four-star offensive tackle, Jelks was among the most important signees of the Commodores class. He grew up attending Tennessee games, and many felt he would land in Knoxville. Jelks has an excellent frame, and outstanding feet for someone his size. Long term, he could become a major player for Vanderbilt up front.

THE SLEEPER

Darreon Herring
Herring is a long and lean outside linebacker who plays the game at a high speed and is highly intelligent. Although he was a bit light in high school, he truly has an excellent frame and could become a key player as he adds bulk. He may prove to be one of the biggest steals of 2012.

Committments	22
Average Stars	3.14
★★★★★	0
★★★★☆	3
★★★☆☆	19
★★☆☆☆	0
Total Stars	69
National Rank: 29	SEC: 9

2013 NEEDS: Let's start with receiver. This is a key area for two reasons. 1.) Vanderbilt only signed two of them in 2012. 2.) A few of the top players on the roster are juniors. In other words, the time to replenish is now, not next year. What this means is that Vanderbilt could take three or four players here. Cornerback is another spot to watch. Vanderbilt has a veteran group, and will be looking for the replacements to those players. Also watch for the Commodores to sign three or more defensive ends.

by Keith Niebuhr/rivals.com

Name	Pos	Ht	Wt	Stars	Hometown	School
Torey Agee	DE	6-3	246	★★★	Opelika, AL	Opelika
Rated as the No. 36 prospect in Alabama by Rivals.com...Son of former Auburn and NFL player Tommie Agee...Participated in the Alabama-Mississippi All-Star Classic.						
Caleb Azubike	DE	6-5	240	★★★★	Nashville, TN	McGavock
Rivals250 selection...Rated as the No. 6 prospect in Tennessee...Rated as the nation's No. 15 weakside defensive end...Participated in the Offense-Defense All-American Bowl.						
Brandon Banks	DB	5-11	165	★★★	Brandywine, MD	Gwynn Park
Rated as the No. 23 prospect in Maryland by Rivals.com...Chose Vanderbilt over Arizona, Cincinnati, UConn, Maryland, Michigan State, Pitt and others.						
Ladarius Banks	DT	6-2	263	★★★	Dallas, GA	East Paulding
Had 60 tackles, 14 tackles for loss and nine sacks as a junior...Chose Vanderbilt over Cincinnati, FIU, Illinois, Southern Miss and Troy.						
Cory Batey	WR	6-0	183	★★★	Nashville, TN	Ensworth
Rated as the No. 25 prospect in Tennessee by Rivals.com...Chose Vanderbilt over Arkansas State, Kentucky and Minnesota.						
Adam Butler	OL	6-5	288	★★★	Duncanville, TX	Duncanville
Rated as the No. 50 prospect in Texas by Rivals.com...Rated as the nation's No. 41 offensive tackle...Participated in the Offense-Defense All-American Bowl.						
Colby Cooke	K	6-4	185	★★★	Goochland, VA	Goochland
Parade All-American ... As a senior, converted 17 field goals and 63 extra points, helping team to state championship game ... Rivals rated No. 8 kicker nationally.						
Blake Fromang	OL	6-8	280	★★★	Orlando, FL	Lake Highland
Chose Vanderbilt over Kentucky, Louisville, NC State, Wake Forest, Cincinnati, Virginia and others...Participated in the Central Florida All-star Game.						
Barrett Gouger	OL	6-5	285	★★★	Chattanooga, TN	Baylor School
Rated as the No. 16 prospect in Tennessee by Rivals.com...Rated as the nation's No. 68 offensive tackle...Chose Vanderbilt over Duke, Georgia, Kentucky and Wake Forest.						
Harding Harper	LB	6-2	212	★★★	Montgomery, AL	Carver
Rated as the No. 31 prospect in Alabama by Rivals.com...Rated as the nation's No. 59 outside linebacker...Had 108 tackles, 11 tackles for loss, three sacks and four interceptions as a senior.						
Paris Head	DB	6-1	170	★★★	Buford, GA	Buford
Rated as the No. 73 prospect in Georgia by Rivals.com...Rated as the nation's No. 55 cornerback...Chose Vanderbilt over South Carolina, UCF and USF.						

Name	Pos	Ht	Wt	Stars	Hometown	School
Darreon Herring	LB	6-2	217	★★★	Stone Mountain, GA	Stephenson
Rated as the No. 38 prospect in Georgia by Rivals.com...Rated as the nation's No. 49 outside linebacker...Enrolled at Vanderbilt in January.						
Will Holden	OL	6-6	280	★★★	Green Cove Springs, FL	Clay
Rated as the No. 63 prospect in Florida by Rivals.com...Rated as the nation's No. 52 offensive tackle...Participated in the FACA North-South All-Star Game.						
Andrew Jelks	OL	6-6	260	★★★★	Paris, TN	Henry County
Rated as the No. 10 prospect in Tennessee by Rivals.com...Rated as the nation's No. 31 offensive tackle...Chose Vanderbilt over Tennessee, Stanford and others.						
Brian Kimbrow	RB	5-9	165	★★★★	Memphis, TN	Memphis East
Rivals250 selection...Rated as the No. 4 prospect in Tennessee...Rated as the nation's No. 4 all-purpose back...Participated in the U.S. Army All-American Bowl.						
Kevin McCoy	OL	6-6	280	★★★	Seffner, FL	Armwood
Rated as the No. 54 prospect in Florida by Rivals.com...Rated as the nation's No. 37 offensive tackle...Chose Vanderbilt over Auburn, UCF, Eastern Michigan, Illinois, Indiana, Louisville and USF.						
Torren McGaster	DB	5-10	185	★★★	Daphne, AL	Daphne
Rated as the No. 22 prospect in Alabama by Rivals.com...Rated as the nation's No. 64 cornerback...Had 37 tackles, two interceptions and five pass breakups as a senior.						
Jaborian McKenzie	ATH	5-8	169	★★★	Natchez, MS	Trinity Episcopal
Rated as the No. 16 prospect in Mississippi by Rivals.com...Switched to Vanderbilt from his original commitment to Southern Miss.						
Patton Robinette	QB	6-5	200	★★★	Maryville, TN	Maryville
Rated as the No. 18 prospect in Tennessee by Rivals.com...Rated as the nation's No. 21 dual-threat quarterback...Switched commitment from North Carolina to Vanderbilt...Enrolled at Vanderbilt in January.						
Jacob Sealand	LB	6-2	216	★★★	Tucker, GA	Tucker
Rated as the No. 42 prospect in Georgia by Rivals.com...Rated as the nation's No. 28 inside linebacker...Had 85 tackles, 17 tackles for loss and six sacks as a junior.						
Jakarri Thomas	LB	6-1	195	★★★	Tallahassee, FL	Godby
Rated as the nation's No. 66 outside linebacker by Rivals.com...Switched his commitment from Arkansas to Vanderbilt before National Signing Day.						
Stephen Weatherly	LB	6-6	215	★★★	Snellville, GA	Shiloh
Rated as the No. 65 prospect in Georgia by Rivals.com...Had 66 tackles, 11.5 sacks and two interceptions as a junior...Chose Vanderbilt over Georgia Tech, NC State, Kentucky and others.						

COMMODORES SPRING ROSTER

No.	Name	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Cl.	Hometown
43	Scot Aiello	DB	5-10	178	So.	Franklin
49	Robby Barbieri	LB	6-2	228	Jr.	Eden Prairie, MN
15	Archibald Barnes	LB	6-4	232	Sr.	Tampa, FL
63	Jake Bernstein	OL	6-3	290	Fr.	Crystal Lake, IL
12	Hunter Bowman	FB	5-11	216	Fr.	Savannah, GA
80	Chris Boyd	WR	6-4	205	So.	Roswell, GA
52	Andrew Bridges	OT	6-6	275	So.	Atlanta, GA
28	Karl Butler	S	6-1	212	Jr.	New Orleans, LA
12	Austyn Carta-Samuels	QB	6-1	224	Jr.	San Jose, CA
12	Steven Clarke	DB	5-10	195	Jr.	Lauderdale Lakes, FL
35	Hasan Clayton	DB	5-11	180	Jr.	Arlington Heights, IL
91	Barron Dixon	DT	6-4	294	So.	Alpharetta, GA
34	Andrew East	SN/LB	6-2	230	So.	Indianpolis, IN
16	Eddie Foster	DB	5-10	172	Sr.	Colleyville, TX
48	Ryan Fowler	PK	5-10	175	Sr.	Taylors, SC
40	Larry Franklin	LB	6-1	210	Fr.	Vero Beach, FL
36	Chase Garnham	LB	6-3	230	Jr.	Fairhope, AL
7	Josh Grady	WR	6-0	188	Fr.	Tampa, FL
49	Josh Gregory	DB	5-11	170	So.	Goodlettsville
84	Daniel Hagaman	WR	6-2	200	So.	Brentwood
23	Andre Hal	DB	6-0	184	Jr.	Port Allen, LA
55	Conor Hart	DL/OL	6-3	265	Fr.	Bloomfield Hills, MI
35	Darreon Herring	LB	6-2	220	Fr.	Stone Mountain, GA
16	Taylor Hudson	P	6-3	210	Fr.	Powell, OH
69	Josh Jelesky	OG	6-5	290	Sr.	Naperville, IL
67	Wesley Johnson	OT/C	6-5	290	Jr.	Nashville
94	Richard Kent	P	6-2	198	Sr.	Marietta, GA
14	Kris Kentera	HB	6-4	218	Fr.	Colorado Springs, CO
33	Derek King	DB	5-11	196	Fr.	Nashville
27	Jacquese Kirk	WR	6-0	175	Fr.	Jasper, AL
17	Jonathan Krause	WR	5-11	182	Jr.	Snellville, GA
1	Kenny Ladler	S	6-1	200	Jr.	Stone Mountain, GA
38	Fitz Lassing	FB	6-3	240	Jr.	Nashville
76	James Lewis	OL	6-5	290	Fr.	Arlington
84	Rob Lohr	DT	6-4	290	Sr.	Phoenixville, PA
31	Javon Marshall	S	5-10	195	Jr.	Huber Heights, OH
87	Jordan Matthews	WR	6-3	205	Jr.	Madison, AL
90	Walker May	DE	6-5	245	Jr.	Birmingham, AL
99	Thad McHaney	DE	6-5	268	Jr.	Nashville
30	Jahmel McIntosh	DB	6-1	198	Fr.	Cleveland, MS
86	Austin Monahan	TE	6-6	252	Sr.	Charlotte, NC
46	Steve Monk	WR	5-11	180	Fr.	Baton Rouge, LA
61	Connor Morrison	SN	6-0	230	Fr.	Edmond, OK
97	Jared Morse	DT	6-2	290	Jr.	Oxford, AL
58	Colt Nichter	DT	6-1	285	Sr.	Park City, UT
5	Warren Norman	RB	5-10	202	Jr.	Stone Mountain, GA
45	Marc Panu	FB	6-1	240	Jr.	Mableton, GA
9	Trent Pruitt	WR	5-9	170	So.	Fitzgerald, GA
77	Spencer Pulley	OG/OT	6-4	285	So.	Germantown
75	Grant Ramsay	OL	6-5	285	So.	Marietta, GA
4	Patton Robinette	QB	6-4	204	Fr.	Maryville
11	Jordan Rodgers	QB	6-1	205	Sr.	Chico, CA
22	Eric Samuels	DB	6-0	200	Sr.	Eustis, FL
81	Steven Scheu	TE	6-5	255	Fr.	Evansville, IN
18	Jerron Seymour	RB	5-7	190	So.	Hialeah, FL
62	Ryan Seymour	OG/OT	6-5	305	Sr.	Kingsland, GA
39	Carey Spear	PK	5-10	190	Jr.	Mayfield Village, OH
2	Zac Stacy	RB	5-9	210	Sr.	Centreville, AL
95	Jimmy Stewart	DE	6-4	235	Fr.	Cape Coral, FL
29	Tristan Strong	LB	6-1	230	Sr.	Loganville, GA
41	Patrick Sutton	LB	6-0	210	Jr.	Charleston, SC
24	Wesley Tate	WR	6-1	218	Jr.	Hendersonville
53	Vince Taylor	DT	6-1	298	So.	Hattiesburg, MS
98	Johnell Thomas	DE	6-0	250	Sr.	Orlando, FL
13	Lafonte Thourogood	RB	6-2	220	Fr.	Virginia Beach, VA
56	Joe Townsend	OL	6-4	285	So.	Hendersonville
19	John Townsley	WR	6-4	202	Jr.	Upper Arlington, OH
89	Dillon van der Wal	TE	6-7	255	So.	Woodland Hills, CA
73	Chase White	OL	6-5	285	So.	Plano, TX
82	Trey Wilkins	WR	5-11	195	So.	Cordova
45	Kellen Williams	LB	6-1	215	Fr.	Winter Haven, FL
32	Andrew Williamson	DB	6-1	200	Fr.	San Antonio, TX
8	Trey Wilson	DB	5-11	192	Sr.	Shreveport, LA
92	Kyle Woestmann	DE	6-3	250	So.	Marietta, GA

INDIVIDUAL STATS

PASSING

	GP	Effic	Cmp	Att	Int	Pct	Yards	TD	Long	Avg/G
J. Rodgers	13	113.8	108	216	10	50.0	1524	9	73	117.2
L. Smith	10	104.6	68	123	6	55.3	668	5	68	66.8

RECEIVING

	GP	No.	Yards	Avg	TD	Long	Avg/G
J. Matthews	13	41	778	19.0	5	49	59.8
C. Boyd	13	31	473	15.3	8	68	36.4
J. Krause	13	23	171	7.4	0	41	13.2

RUSHING

	GP	Att	Gain	Loss	Net	Avg	TD	Long	Avg/G
Z. Stacy	13	201	1267	74	1193	5.9	14	77	91.8
J. Rodgers	13	117	545	125	420	3.6	4	40	32.3
J. Seymour	13	83	298	30	268	3.2	5	40	20.6

DEF. LEADERS

Tackles: C. Marve 91, S. Richardson 63, C. Hayward 62
Tackles for loss: T. Fugger 13.5, R. Lohr 11.5, C. Marve 8.5
Sacks: T. Fugger 8, R. Lohr 5, two tied with 3
Interceptions: C. Hayward 7, T. Wilson 3, two tied with 2

NOTEBOOK

Josh Grady felt like he was back at Armwood High School in Tampa, Fla. — standing in the shotgun, opting whether to roll out for a pass or scramble down the field for a big run.

The only difference this time is Grady wasn't playing quarterback. He was in the Wildcat.

"You might as well call my whole high school career Wildcat," said Grady, who said 95 percent of his high school snaps came out of the shotgun. "I'm definitely comfortable out there."

He looked the part during Vanderbilt's spring game. He totaled 94 yards on just five touches out of the direct-snap formation. He rushed for 35 yards on three carries, getting around the left end for an 8-yard touchdown. He also converted both passes, including a 55-yard touchdown to **Jordan Matthews** to end the game.

After redshirting in 2011, Grady was moved to slot receiver. Coach **James Franklin** said the Wildcat wrinkle could become a staple if the speedy Grady makes it work.

"I love it," Grady said. "It is a lot of similar stuff we did in high school. It is definitely one of my comfort zones. As long as Coach Franklin keeps giving me the opportunity, I'm going to do what I can."

• After sitting out all of 2011 due to a knee injury, redshirt junior running back **Warren Norman** participated in the last two full spring practices. The former SEC Freshman of the Year impressed Franklin, who is optimistic about Norman playing in the fall.

"Everybody has been telling me about how good Warren is since I got here. I hadn't seen it," Franklin said. "He showed some flashes. He did some nice things, so that's exciting."

• As soon as the spring game ended, ripping up the grass began.

For the first time in 14 years, Vanderbilt's games at Dudley Field will be played on an artificial turf surface. A new JumboTron and hillside seating behind the open end zone are set to be in place by the season opener on Aug. 30. Later this summer, construction of an indoor practice facility will begin.

OPPOSING COACHES VIEW

• **On last season:** "They were fun to watch. They did what they needed to do offensively most of the time. I thought the quarterback did a good job for them. I thought the defense played the way you want a defense to play. They were impressive to watch, and well coached, particularly on defense. It's a matter of getting over the hump and winning some close games, a matter of making the right plays at the right time."

• **On how hard it is to win at Vanderbilt:** "Vanderbilt is Vanderbilt. It's a cycle job. When you can recruit and get enough seniors and redshirt juniors and enough stockpiled talent like last year, you can be competitive. When you get into years with lean upper-level classes, like a development program, you won't do well."

Rob Lohr
Photo by Michael Marti

zone, both from a vocal standpoint and as he moves from the outside to middle linebacker. He finished sixth on the team last year with 51 tackles and two sacks.

"We're not asking the exact same things of Chase right now, but we hope to by next fall," linebackers coach Brent Pry said.

"It is hard to compare anybody to Chris. He was such a unique guy. Chase has his own really, really good linebacker traits and characteristics that he brings to the position. He can be as good or better."

Defensive tackle Rob Lohr anchors an experienced line. Quick off the ball and asserting his 290 pounds, the 6-4 Lohr recorded 11.5 tackles for loss, picked up five sacks and forced two fumbles as a junior. He was limited in the spring due to an injury but is expected to be back by fall camp.

Defensive tackle Colt Nichter and end Walker May also return, while Johnell Thomas and Kyle Woestmann battled in the spring for the other starting defensive end position.

Senior cornerback Trey Wilson paces a secondary that accounted for nearly all of Vanderbilt's 19 interceptions, which ranked in the top 10 nationally. Andre Hal, Steven Clarke and Eddie Foster are vying for the other cornerback spot that came open after All-American Casey Hayward's departure.

Wilson, who picked off three passes and took two back for touchdowns, could be the next shutdown corner.

"I feel like if there is a ball thrown at me, it's mine," Wilson said.

Safety Sean Richardson is gone, leaving Javon Marshall, Kenny Ladler and Eric Samuels to replace the production.

"I think the defensive depth that we have is much further along than what we have on offense," Franklin said.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Last year, as a sophomore, Carey Spear took the starting kicking job away from Ryan Fowler, a two-year starter. But Spear was replaced by Fowler after missing a 27-yarder to force overtime against Arkansas — his third miss in four games. Fowler made 4 of 7 field-goal attempts, but missed twice against Tennessee.

Neither kicker converted from beyond 40 yards in 2011. This spring, Franklin attempted to create his own pressure situations, throwing water on

BEST & BRIGHTEST

MOST VALUABLE PLAYER

WR Jordan Matthews

Physical wideout with great leaping ability and soft hands. ... As a sophomore, he led the team with 41 receptions and 778 receiving yards — most at Vanderbilt in four years. ... After just five catches for 63 yards and no TDs in first five games, he displayed playmaking ability with 36 receptions for 715 yards and five TDs in final seven games. ... Became first Vanderbilt player since 2000 to have three straight 100-yard receiving games. ... Distant cousin of Jerry Rice.

EMERGING STAR

LB Archibald Barnes

Quick, physical outside linebacker who took over as a starter after the fourth game due to an injury to Tristan Strong. ... Top returning tackler after posting 59 in nine starts in 2011. ... Showed off athleticism against rival Tennessee, snagging two interceptions and taking one 100 yards for a TD. ... Also forced three fumbles and broke up six passes. ... Redshirt senior is elder statesmen of linebacker unit that is thin on depth.

TOP NEWCOMER

WR Josh Grady

Former quarterback poses huge threat in Wildcat formation. ... Grady (6-0, 188) redshirted in 2011 but was third-string QB and headed up scout team offense. ... In spring game, he totaled 94 yards on five direct snaps, throwing and running for a TD. ... Passed for 2,109 yards and 24 TDs in addition to rushing for 865 yards and 14 TDs as a senior at Armwood High School in Tampa, Fla.

2009 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	16.3	113
Rushing	160.0	49
Passing	146.3	112
Total	306.3	110
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	23.3	46
Rushing	197.8	105
Passing	164.9	9
Total	362.8	56
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 3	+ 0.25	45

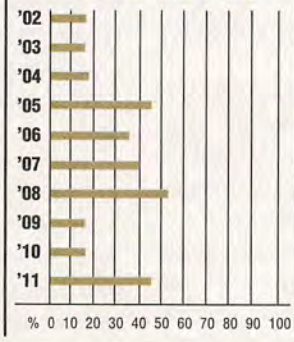
2010 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	16.9	112
Rushing	138.8	80
Passing	159.4	105
Total	298.3	110
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	31.2	94
Rushing	193.0	100
Passing	226.3	75
Total	419.3	93
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
- 4	- 0.33	79

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	26.7	61
Rushing	164.5	47
Passing	174.6	97
Total	339.1	98
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	21.6	29
Rushing	130.5	36
Passing	192.2	18
Total	322.8	18
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 1	+ 0.08	49

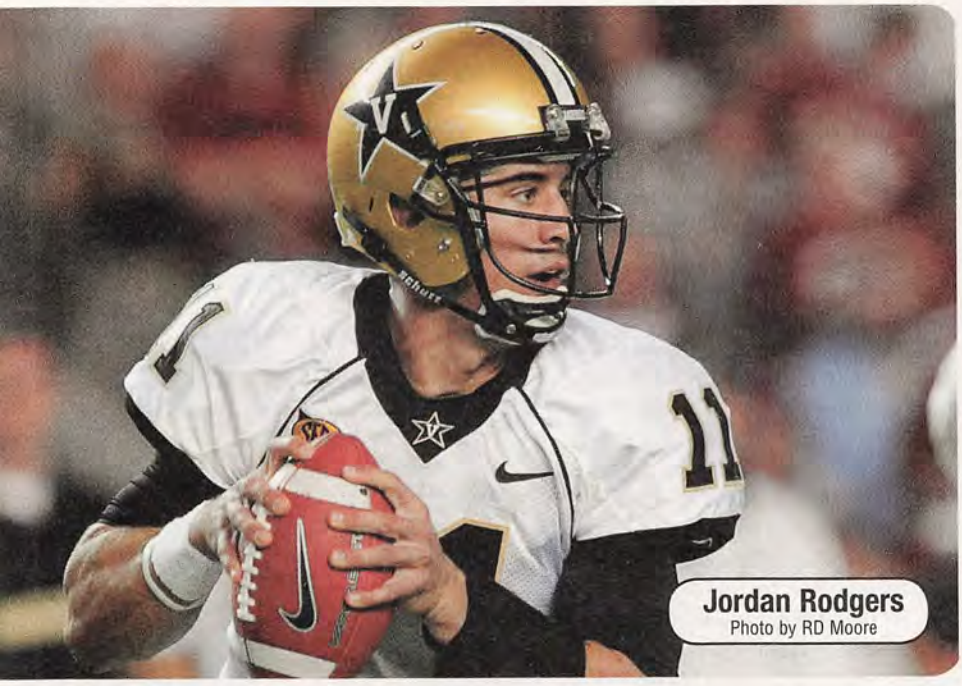
10-YEAR WINNING TREND



RESULTS

	6-7, 2-6	
W	ELON	45-14
W	CONNECTICUT	24-21
W	OLE MISS	30-7
L	at South Carolina	3-21
L	at Alabama	0-34
L	GEORGIA	28-33
W	ARMY	44-21
L	ARKANSAS	28-31
L	at Florida	21-26
W	KENTUCKY	38-8
L	at Tennessee (OT)	21-27
W	at Wake Forest	41-7
	Liberty Bowl	
L	vs. Cincinnati	24-31

PLAYER PROFILE



Jordan Rodgers
Photo by RD Moore

Re-energized Rodgers Ready to Rebound

The calendar has been flipped to 2012 for some time, but Vanderbilt quarterback Jordan Rodgers hasn't forgotten about that last day of 2011.

His junior season ended when he was pulled from the Liberty Bowl against Cincinnati in the third quarter after a lackluster 4-of-14 passing performance that resulted in 26 yards and one interception.

"It is a bad taste in your mouth," Rodgers said. "It is something you want to forget about, but something you want to keep in the back of your mind a little bit every now and then to think about."

After the 31-24 loss, Rodgers was visibly upset about coach James Franklin's decision to remove him.

"Me and Jordan have probably talked 72 times since then," Franklin said. "He wasn't happy when he got pulled out of the game. He shouldn't be. If he is a competitor, he shouldn't be. But there is still a way to handle that."

This spring, Rodgers channeled his frustration and stretched the gap with the rest of the pack in the quarterback competition. Larry Smith has graduated, but new depth has arrived with Wyoming transfer Austyn Carta-Samuels and freshman Patton Robinette, a mid-year enrollee.

Rodgers goes into fall camp as the obvious frontrunner because Carta-Samuels, who possesses a stronger arm, spent most of the spring playing catch up and learning plays.

Rodgers played in all 13 games last year and started the last seven, giving the Commodores a dual-threat option and getting them into the end zone more frequently. The 6-1, 205-pounder completed 50 percent of his passes for 1,524 yards, nine touchdowns and 10 interceptions. One of the best conditioned athletes on the team, he also finished second in rushing with 420 yards and four touchdowns.

The younger brother of Green Bay Packers quarterback Aaron Rodgers, Jordan possesses an obvious drive for perfection. The junior college transfer spent spring workouts fine turning his short passes, an area that plagued him often, including the Liberty Bowl.

As for mending fences, Rodgers and Franklin, a former quarterback, say they're on the same page.

"I think there were times that me and Jordan last year bumped heads," Franklin said.

"There is nothing wrong with that. There's growth. I think he has a better feel for me now. He is much more open; he is much more coachable. Because of that, we're going to be able to maximize his ability and experience here."

his kickers, whispering into their ears or blowing an air horn.

Senior punter Richard Kent is back for his third year as the starter. After leading the nation in punts as a sophomore, he averaged 42.5 yards and booted more than one-third inside the 20-yard line in 2011.

Cornerback Andre Hal is expected to return kicks after averaging 23.8 yards. His 96-yard touchdown against Georgia matched the fourth-longest return in school history. Wide receiver Jonathan Krause will handle the punt returns again.

SCHEDULE ANALYSIS

Vanderbilt's improved program and new turf field will get some prime-time pub when it opens with SEC foe South Carolina in a nationally televised Thursday-night game. A road trip to Northwestern opens the non-conference slate.

Vanderbilt is the only SEC school with two non-conference games against BCS opponents (the Commodores close the regular season at Wake Forest for the second straight year). In the SEC, they travel to new member Missouri.

The revenge tour begins at Georgia on Sept. 22 and continues when rival Tennessee rolls in on Nov. 17. Georgia defensive coordinator Todd Grantham and Vanderbilt coach James Franklin got into a heated postgame confrontation last October. Tennessee coach Derek Dooley ripped Vanderbilt in a speech to his team after edging the Commodores in overtime.

— Jerome Boettcher

SCHEDULE

Date	Opponent	'11 Record
Aug. 30	SOUTH CAROLINA	11-2
Sept. 8	at Northwestern	6-7
Sept. 15	PRESBYTERIAN	4-7
Sept. 22	at Georgia	10-4
Oct. 6	at Missouri	8-5
Oct. 13	FLORIDA	7-6
Oct. 20	AUBURN	8-5
Oct. 27	MASSACHUSETTS	5-6
Nov. 3	at Kentucky	5-7
Nov. 10	at Ole Miss	2-10
Nov. 17	TENNESSEE	5-7
Nov. 24	at Wake Forest	6-7

LOUISIANA TECH | BULLDOGS

WAC rank: 1 Record: 8-5 WAC record: 6-1 (1st) Stadium: Joe Aillet Stadium: 30,600

By Geoff Grammer

Photo by Kirby Lee

"We have big-play potential on the team, which is something we have lacked in the past."
— Coach Sonny Dykes

BULLDOGS at a GLANCE

COACH: Sonny Dykes — At Louisiana Tech and overall: 13-12, 2 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Tony Franklin
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Tommy Spangler
LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2011
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 2010

RETURNING STARTERS: 14; 7 offense, 5 defense, kicker, punter

PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Colby Cameron, WR Quinton Patton, WR Myles White, DE IK Enemkpali, SS Chad Boyd, FS Jamel Johnson, P Ryan Allen

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: The offense has four returning starters up front, a returning starter at QB and a 1,200-yard receiver in the mix. Ray Guy Award-winning punter Ryan Allen is back. Coach Sonny Dykes signed an extension the day before last year's bowl game, giving the returning WAC champs a solid foundation for repeat success.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: The defense lost the WAC Defensive Player of the Year in LB Adrien Cole, and several other key performers. Could non-conference games vs. Texas A&M, Illinois, Virginia and Houston lead to another 1-4 start? If so, that would kill the momentum of the team's surprising 2011 campaign.

OFFENSE

Colby Cameron is the clear-cut starter at quarterback, the first time in three years under coach Sonny Dykes there has been such certainty in the pass-happy offense.

Of course Cameron held the starting job in 2010 before losing it. And Cameron had seemingly won the gig in spring 2011 before losing out in fall camp to 17-year-old true freshman Nick Isham, who started seven games last year.

But Cameron solidified his starting role by leading the Bulldogs down the stretch last season. He helped Tech to the WAC title, averaging nearly 240 passing yards per game, with 13 touchdowns and only three interceptions. Isham transferred in the spring.

Making life easier for Cameron are four returning starters on the line and speedy receivers. Senior All-WAC wideout Quinton Patton (1,202 receiving yards, 11 touchdowns) is the headliner.

Sophomore tailback Hunter Lee, who started four games in 2011 as a freshman walk-on, will be the starter, but his ability to carry the load for a whole season is uncertain. Senior backup Ray Holley should see plenty of reps.

DEFENSE

Louisiana Tech loses some key pieces to a unit that led the WAC in scoring defense.

Graduation losses include: linebackers Jay Dudley and Adrien Cole (WAC Defensive Player of the Year); cornerback Terry Carter; and defensive ends Matt Broha and Christian Lacey. The Bulldogs have to replace 372 tackles — including 44 for loss and 18 sacks — and six interceptions.

The 4-2-5 defense won't be as good, but it won't have to be in the watered-down WAC. The cornerbacks and linebackers have a lot of question marks due to inexperience, but there is plenty of potential.

The strengths are on the defensive line and at safety. Strong safety Chad Boyd can be one of the WAC's top players, but he sat out spring with a torn labrum in his right shoulder.

Justin Ellis and Shakeil Lucas start at tackle, while Jon'al White is a third run-stuffer in the rotation. Defensive ends Kendrick James and IK Enemkpali have big shoes to fill as last year's starters combined for 16 sacks.

SPECIAL TEAMS

If a punter can be a team MVP, Ryan Allen is your guy. Allen won the 2011 Ray Guy Award with a 46.1-yard average, while leading the nation with 39 punts inside the 20, including 22 that fell within the 10.

Kicker Matt Nelson can be better, even after a 15-field goal junior season that included four from beyond 40 yards. There are plenty of speedy options in the return game.

OVERVIEW

The offense should be better with Cameron comfortable in Dykes' pass-happy offense, and the program seems to be in fine shape with possible conference realignment coming for the 2013 season. Tech, despite a 1-4 start, won the WAC and reached a bowl game in 2011. The Bulldogs should defend their league crown despite some big personnel losses.

TOP NEWCOMER

WR D.J. Banks: The Tulane transfer from nearby West Monroe, La., looked right at home in spring drills, having two 100-yard receiving games in scrimmages. He left a good impression by capping the spring game with an 80-yard touchdown grab. Banks should grab plenty of passes in this offense.

2012 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE

QB	10	**Colby Cameron***	6-2	205	Sr.
RB	36	Hunter Lee	5-10	200	So.
WR	7	**Myles White***	6-1	185	Sr.
WR	4	**Quinton Patton***	6-1	195	Sr.
WR	8	Jacarri Jackson	6-2	185	Jr.
WR	19	Andrew Guillot	5-10	180	Sr.
LT	67	**Oscar Johnson***	6-6	350	Sr.
LG	57	**Kevin Saia***	6-2	305	Sr.
C	63	**Stephen Warner***	6-0	315	Sr.
RG	66	Matthew Shepperd	6-2	305	Jr.
RT	78	**Jordan Mills***	6-6	315	Sr.

DEFENSE

LE	42	Kendrick James	6-1	240	Jr.
DT	70	**Justin Ellis***	6-2	340	Jr.
DT	94	**Shakeil Lucas***	6-2	280	Jr.
RE	41	IK Enemkpali	6-2	245	Jr.
LB	46	Rufus Porter	6-1	210	Jr.
LB	56	Solomon Randle	5-11	230	Sr.
CB	24	**Dave Clark***	6-2	190	Sr.
CB	15	Brice Abraham	5-11	175	Fr.
NB	47	Javontay Crowe	5-11	185	Sr.
SS	31	**Chad Boyd***	5-10	200	Sr.
FS	20	**Jamel Johnson***	6-1	200	Sr.

SPECIAL TEAMS

K	33	**Matt Nelson***	5-10	160	Sr.
P	86	**Ryan Allen***	6-2	215	Sr.

* Returning Starters in Bold

2012 SCHEDULE

Aug. 30	TEXAS A&M
Sept. 8	at Houston
Sept. 15	RICE
Sept. 22	at Illinois
Sept. 29	at Virginia
Oct. 6	UNLV
Oct. 20	IDAHO
Oct. 27	at New Mexico State
Nov. 3	UTSA
Nov. 10	at Texas State
Nov. 17	UTAH STATE
Nov. 24	at San Jose State

2011 RESULTS

L	at Southern Miss	17-19
W	CENTRAL ARKANSAS	48-42
L	HOUSTON	34-35
L	at Mississippi State	20-26
L	HAWAII	26-44
W	at Idaho	24-11
W	at Utah State	24-17
W	SAN JOSE STATE	38-28
W	at Fresno State	41-21
W	at Mississippi	27-7
W	at Nevada	24-20
W	NEW MEXICO STATE	44-0
	Pointsettia Bowl	
L	vs. TCU	24-31

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	30.1	42
Rushing	146.2	70
Passing	248.4	45
Total	394.6	51

DEFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	23.2	41
Rushing	127.4	29
Pass	249.1	91
Total	376.5	57

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	RANK
+ 11	+ 0.85	13

New Wave of Quarterbacks Ready To Storm Pass-Happy League

If 2011 was the Year of the Quarterback in Conference USA, what will 2012 be?

It's a difficult question to answer. Gone are Case Keenum (Houston), G.J. Kinne (Tulsa), Austin Davis (Southern Miss) and Dominique Davis (East Carolina). A marquee season for quarterbacks has given way to waiting for stars to emerge.

The dearth of quarterback talent makes picking division champions a bit tricky. So does the loss of high-profile coaches like Houston's Kevin Sumlin and Southern Miss' Larry Fedora.

Despite the exits of Keenum and Sumlin, expect Houston to make a strong run at the West Division crown behind sophomore quarterback David Piland.

The sophomore redshirted in 2011, but was thrown into duty two years ago as a true freshman after a succession of injuries. He performed admirably, which makes him a candidate to go from relative obscurity to a preseason all-league pick.

Piland passed for 2,641 yards and 24 touchdowns in eight games in 2010 after Keenum and backup Cotton Turner were injured early in the season. Piland, who was intercepted 14 times in 2010, sat out last season and witnessed from the sidelines Keenum's assault on the record books.

SMU will be the favorite and Tulsa will be in the hunt, too, as former Nebraska quarterback Cody Green, who played in 17 games with the Cornhuskers, steps in to the starting role.

In the East Division, Marshall and Tulane return the best players at the quarterback position, but UCF gets a slight nod in the East over Marshall, operating under third-year coach Doc Holliday. What makes UCF a favorite is its loaded backfield, an experienced, productive running back tandem of Brynn Harvey and Latavius Murray along with University of Miami transfer Storm Johnson.

UCF coach George O'Leary also has had a knack for recovering from lackluster seasons, and he's coming off one that goes in the "oh-so-close" category. The Knights finished 5-7, but outscored their opponents 325-220 and lost by a touchdown or less in six games.

At Marshall, eight offensive starters are back from a Thundering Herd team that won seven games and beat Florida International in a bowl game.

Marshall has a chance to win the East with a schedule that includes key home games against division favorites UCF and Houston. Among the returnees for the Thundering Herd are quarterback Rakeem Cato, who passed for 2,059 yards and 15 touchdowns, and Aaron Dobson, who caught 49 passes for 12 touchdowns and 668 yards.

— Phil Stukenborg

Conference USA Picks

EAST	Good news	Bad news	Our call
1. UCF	Veterans abound. RB Latavius Murray and QB Blake Bortles are key offensive players.	Tough first month with games at Ohio State (Sept. 8) and vs. Missouri (Sept. 29).	UCF lost four of its last six, but only by an average of 4.2 points. Knights can reverse fortunes as East champs.
2. Marshall	WR Aaron Dobson is one of the top players in the conference.	Marshall ranked 11th in the conference in yards per game last season.	Offense should improve for coach Doc Holliday, who will have Herd back in the postseason.
3. Southern Miss	DE Jamie Collins and DB Deron Wilson are two of the league's best defenders.	Southern Miss will be extremely inexperienced at quarterback.	First-year coach Ellis Johnson doesn't have quite enough talent to make division charge right away.
4. East Carolina	ECU set back-to-back school attendance records, topping an average of 50,000 last year.	Pirates have to go to South Carolina, Southern Miss and North Carolina in September.	Losing QB Dominique Davis (3,235 yards passing) too much to overcome in postseason push.
5. UAB	Hiring of ex-Arkansas offensive coordinator Garrick McGee received positive reviews.	It's a challenging September — at South Carolina and Ohio State in successive weekends.	UAB will start slow again and battle to keep from joining Memphis in the bottom of the rankings.
6. Memphis	TCU co-offensive coordinator Justin Fuente replaces Larry Porter, who was 3-21 in two years.	QB Taylor Reed, who started last year as a freshman, left the team.	Fuente will be an improvement, but without much talent, he'll fight to stay out of the cellar.
WEST			
1. SMU	RB Zach Line, an honorable mention All-American, is back after scoring league-high 17 TDs.	Mustangs lost eight offensive starters, including QB J.J. McDermott and WR Cole Beasley.	Line — who was C-USA's only 1,000-yard rusher in 2011 — gives Mustangs a chance to win the West.
2. Tulsa	Tulsa returns its top two tailbacks and two receivers who each amassed at least 850 yards.	Golden Hurricane lost QB G.J. Kinne and three starting offensive linemen.	Tulsa remains a candidate to win the division, with seven defensive starters back, led by safety Dexter McCoil.
3. Houston	Coach Kevin Sumlin departed for Texas A&M, but didn't leave cupboard bare.	NCAA record-setting QB Case Keenum and the league's top two receivers are gone.	Cougars will contend in the West behind new coach Tony Levin and QB David Piland.
4. Tulane	Experienced QB Ryan Griffin and LB Trent Mackey give the Green Wave hope.	First-year coach Curtis Johnson takes over a team that is 31-76 in the past nine years.	Experience at QB and RB (Orleans Darkwa) makes Tulane a middle-of-the-pack possibility.
5. Rice	QB Taylor McHargue and leading receiver Vance McDonald return.	The Owls, who are 23-38 under coach David Bailiff, open against UCLA and Kansas.	There's enough talent here to move up and possibly challenge Houston for third place.
6. UTEP	QB Nick Lamaison and WR Mike Edwards anchor the offense, along with C Eloy Atkinson.	Miners lost MLB Jeremy Springer, the team's top tackler, and S Travaun Nixon (four INTs).	With tough non-conference slate, coach Mike Price is headed for a seventh straight losing season.

Lindy's 2012 ALL C-USA Team

OFFENSE - FIRST TEAM

QB	David Piland	So.	Houston
RB	Zach Line	Sr.	SMU
RB	Charles Sims	Jr.	Houston
WR	Darius Johnson	Sr.	SMU
WR	Aaron Dobson	Sr.	Marshall
TE	Luke Willson	Sr.	Rice
C	Trent Dupy	Sr.	Tulsa
OL	Jacolby Ashworth	Sr.	Houston
OL	Joe Duhon	Sr.	Southern Miss
OL	Theo Goins	Sr.	UCF
OL	Stetson Burnett	Jr.	Tulsa
AP	Tracy Lampley	Sr.	Southern Miss
K	Matt Hogan	Sr.	Houston

DEFENSE - FIRST TEAM

DL	Margus Hunt	Sr.	SMU
DL	Victor Gray	Jr.	UCF
DL	Cory Dorris	Sr.	Tulsa
DL	Jamie Collins	Sr.	Southern Miss
LB	Trent Mackey	Sr.	Tulane
LB	Taylor Reed	Sr.	SMU
LB	Jeremy Grove	So.	East Carolina
DB	D.J. Hayden	Sr.	Houston
DB	Bryce Callahan	So.	Rice
DB	Kemal Ishmael	Sr.	UCF
DB	Dexter McCoil	Sr.	Tulsa
P	Ian Campbell	Sr.	UTEP

OFFENSE - SECOND TEAM

QB	Ryan Griffin	Sr.	Tulane
RB	Orleans Darkwa	Jr.	Tulane
RB	Trey Watts	Jr.	Tulsa
WR	Justin Hardy	So.	East Carolina
WR	Willie Carter	Sr.	Tulsa
WR	Kevin Wright	So.	Memphis
C	Jordan Rae	Sr.	UCF
OL	Chris Hubbard	Sr.	UAB
OL	Jordan Devey	Sr.	Memphis
OL	Drew Carroll	So.	Rice
OL	Will Simmons	Jr.	East Carolina
AP	Rannell Hall	So.	UCF
K	Chris Boswell	Jr.	Rice

DEFENSE - SECOND TEAM

DL	Justin Dixon	Jr.	East Carolina
DL	Dasman McCullum	So.	Southern Miss
DL	Jeremiah Taylor	Jr.	Marshall
DL	Torian Pittman	Sr.	SMU
LB	Shawn Jackson	Jr.	Tulsa
LB	Cameron Nwosu	Jr.	Rice
LB	Ja'Gared Davis	Sr.	SMU
DB	Deron Wilson	Sr.	Southern Miss
DB	Paul Porras	Jr.	Rice
DB	Marco Nelson	Jr.	Tulsa
DB	Ryan Travis	Sr.	Tulane
P	Tom Hornsey	Jr.	Memphis

THE BIG ONES

Sept. 1	Marshall at West Virginia
Sept. 1	SMU at Baylor
Sept. 8	UCF at Ohio State
Sept. 15	Texas A&M at SMU
Sept. 15	Houston at UCLA
Sept. 29	TCU at SMU
Sept. 29	Houston vs. Rice (Reliant Stadium)
Oct. 6	Boise State at Southern Miss
Oct. 20	Houston at SMU
Oct. 20	Marshall at Southern Miss
Oct. 27	UCF at Marshall
Nov. 3	Houston at East Carolina
Nov. 10	Tulsa at Houston
Nov. 17	Houston at Marshall
Nov. 24	Tulsa at SMU

BOWL CONNECTIONS

Champion
AutoZone Liberty Bowl vs. SEC

C-USA #2
Beef O'Brady's Bowl vs. Big East

C-USA #3
Ticket City Bowl vs. Big Ten

C-USA #4
Bell Helicopter Armed Forces Bowl vs. Mountain West

C-USA #5
R+L Carriers New Orleans Bowl vs. Sun Belt

C-USA #6
Sheraton Hawaii Bowl vs. Mountain West

C-USA #7
Military Bowl vs. ACC
(C-USA is secondary selection in 2012)

TOP 10 NFL TALENT

1. Margus Hunt	DL	Sr.	SMU	Ex-world junior discus champ, blocked 8 kicks in first 14 games.
2. Dexter McCoil	DB	Sr.	Tulsa	His 13 career INTs are tied for school record.
3. Aaron Dobson	WR	Sr.	Marshall	Scored 12 TDs in 2011, averaged 13.6 yards per reception.
4. Zach Line	RB	Sr.	SMU	Averaged 122.4 rushing yards, led C-USA RBs with 17 TDs.
5. Willie Carter	WR	Sr.	Tulsa	Averaged 14.2 yards per reception and 79 yards per game.
6. Darius Johnson	WR	Sr.	SMU	C-USA's returning leader in receiving yards per game (86.0).
7. Luke Willson	TE	Sr.	Rice	Scored three TDs in 2011; averaged 10.8 yards per catch.
8. Jamie Collins	DL	Sr.	S. Miss	Had 6.5 sacks in 2011, 19.5 tackles for lost yardage.
9. Orleans Darkwa	RB	Jr.	Tulane	His 13 TDs ranked second among C-USA running backs in 2011.
10. Trent Dupy	C	Sr.	Tulsa	Graded at 90 percent in 2011 opener vs. No. 1 Oklahoma.

Most Valuable Player	Offensive Player of the Year	Defensive Player of the Year	Newcomer of the Year
Zach Line, RB, SMU	Charles Sims, RB, Houston	Jamie Collins, DL/LB, So. Miss	Storm Johnson, RB, UCF

HONOR ROLL

Most accurate passer	Ryan Griffin	Tulane
Strongest arm	David Piland	Houston
Best scrambler	Jonathan Perry	UAB
Coolest in the clutch	Rakeem Cato	Marshall
Toughest to bring down	Zach Line	SMU
Best hands	Luke Willson	Rice
Most dangerous deep threat	Darius Johnson	SMU
Best pass blocker	Jacolby Ashworth	Houston
Best run blocker	Joe Duhon	Southern Miss
Best pass rusher	Jamie Collins	Southern Miss
Best cover corner	Bryce Callahan	Rice
Special teams demon	Tracey Lampley	Southern Miss

MEMPHIS TIGERS

OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Darrell Dickey **DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Barry Odom** **STADIUM: Liberty Bowl Memorial Stadium: 61,008**

AT A GLANCE

2011 RECORD:
2-10, 1-7 C-USA (6th, East)

COACH:
Justin Fuente — At Memphis and overall, 1st year

RETURNING STARTERS:
11; 4 offense, 5 defense, punter, kicker

PLAYERS TO WATCH:
RB Jerrell Rhodes, WR Marcus Rucker, WR Kevin Wright, LT Jordan Devey, DT Terry Redden, CB Bobby McCain

PRIMARY STRENGTHS:
It's hard to imagine that such a poor defense in recent seasons might become a team strength. But the Tiger defense appeared to be much improved in the spring, especially up front. Newcomers to the starting lineup — LB Charles Harris and DT Terry Redden — were teammates in high school in Memphis and are poised for breakout seasons.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS:
Offensively, there's little for Fuente to be excited about as depth is an issue, especially at running back. Two experienced quarterbacks decided to transfer, and the Tigers will be opening their fourth consecutive season with a different starting quarterback. Three starting QBs have departed the past two years.

KEY LOSSES:
QB Taylor Reed, RB Billy Foster, WR Tannar Rehrer, OL Ronald Leary, DT Dontari Poe, DT Frank Trotter

OVERVIEW:
Former Tiger running back Larry Porter's first stint as a head coach was brief. He was dismissed after two disappointing seasons in which the Tigers went 3-21, replaced by Fuente, TCU's co-offensive coordinator. Regardless of how organized, demanding and disciplined Fuente appears to be, it will take time for him to resurrect a program amid one of the worst stretches in its 100-year history.

New Coach Fuentes Looks to Reverse Tigers' Woes

Talk about inheriting a difficult situation. First-year Memphis coach Justin Fuente takes over for Larry Porter, who was dismissed after two dismal seasons. Fuente found a team without much depth or experience at quarterback or running back.

Oh, he also lost his top defensive lineman, Dontari Poe, who opted to skip his senior season. He was an overnight sensation at the NFL Combine.

So much for the quick fix.

Fuente, a former Oklahoma quarterback and TCU's co-offensive coordinator for the past three years, understands the program's scholarship numbers and talent are lacking, but he spent the spring introducing the players to his blueprint for molding a winner.

"We had a lot to teach from a work ethic standpoint and from an accountability and discipline standpoint," Fuente said. "You can't build a house without a foundation. It's not a short-term deal. It's day after day, month after month, year after year."

Offensively, Memphis was a disaster for the second straight year. Among the nation's lowest-ranked units in 2010, it fared about the same in 2011, if not a little worse.

Defensively, it was roughly the same story. The unit was unable to hold multiple second-half advantages. The pass defense ranked last nationally, allowing nearly 300 yards per game. The defense allowed an average of 491 yards — 30 more per game than it did the previous season.

To make matters more challenging for Fuente, shortly after his arrival, Memphis was invited to join the Big East, a move that will become official in July 2013. It gives Fuente yet another deadline for his program, a founding member of Conference USA, but a school that has never won a league title.

"We've got to raise our work level; we've got to raise our expectation level and we've got to raise our commitment level to meet a new standard," Fuente said. "The only way to do that is to roll our sleeves up and go to work."

OFFENSE

Fuente entered his first spring shortly after quarterback Andy Summerlin, the 2011 opening-game starter, asked for his release. After spring workouts, sophomore quarterback Taylor Reed, who became the starter last fall as a freshman, also asked for his release.

Fuente was left with Texas Tech transfer Jacob Karam, who had moved ahead of Reed at the end of the spring. Karam, who played sparingly at Texas Tech, has one year of eligibility.

He'll be backed up by junior Will Gilchrist, who has yet to take a snap at the position. Paxton Lynch, a 6-5 incoming freshman from Deltona, Fla., likely will be in the mix. He was the MVP of the Central Florida high school all-star game in December.

Fuente was in charge of potent offenses at TCU and is expected to interject excitement into a Tiger unit that passed for only 10 touchdowns last fall, last in C-USA. But he will need time.

The running game will be a question mark, too. Junior Jerrell Rhodes is clearly the best back but has been injured for much of his career. Injuries limited him to three games and 30 carries last season. Artaves Gibson, who was the team's second-leading rusher with 316 yards, is a physical, punishing runner.

The key to the running game's success might be junior college transfer Jai Steib. He averaged 5.5 yards per carry and 93 yards per game for College of the Desert in Palm Desert, Calif.

"The mark of this team will be how do we handle adversity," Fuente said. "We're going to face adversity. It's just going to happen."

The receivers will be a more seasoned bunch, led by sophomore Kevin Wright and senior Marcus Rucker. Wright has big-play potential and a prototypical receiver's build (6-4, 215). Rucker fought knee injuries a year ago, but can be a go-to guy.

DEFENSE

Memphis languished among the worst defensive teams in the nation, ranking 117th nationally in total defense by allowing 490 yards per game — and that was with Dontari Poe anchoring the defensive front.

Poe has departed for the NFL, but Fuente was impressed by the effectiveness of his defensive line in the spring, particularly nose guard Terry Redden, a Memphis high school prep product. At linebacker, the Tigers return Kenyata Johnson and Akeem Davis and expect sophomore Charles Harris to be a playmaker in the middle.

The defensive backfield has been a problem for several seasons, but might improve, although promising junior Taurean Nixon, who started nine games last year, asked for his release after spring practice.

Lonnie Ballentine and Cannon Smith are returning starters at safety, and sophomore Bobby McCain is back after a solid freshman season. He returned an interception 79 yards for a touchdown in the team's lone C-USA win at Tulane.

Former Missouri assistant Barry Odom begins his first stint as a defensive coordinator, and the early feedback after spring workouts was encouraging. The defense improved quickly and the play of the secondary was markedly better.

Defensive end Zach Gholson said what he instantly liked about Odom's defensive scheme was that it didn't rely on having a mammoth front.

"Our defense is all about quickness," he said. "And Coach (Odom) has brought a really good energy to the defense. We all feed off it."

SPECIAL TEAMS

The kicking game will be handled by veterans. Senior Paulo Henriques is in his third season as a the team's field-goal kicker, while punter Tom Hornsey is back for his third season. Henriques struggled from long distance, as he was only 2 of 8 from 40 yards and beyond.

The Tigers were last in the conference in kickoff returns (18.0 average) and ninth in punt returns. Memphis hasn't returned a kickoff for a touchdown in 16 seasons.

— Phil Stukenborg

Akeem Davis
Photo by Nelson Chenault-US PRESSWIRE

SCOUTING REPORT: Offense

2011 stats: 84.0 ypg rushing (12th in C-USA/119th NCAA), 190.3 passing (12th/85th), 274.3 total offense (12th/116th), 16.3 ppg (12th/115th)

POS	STARTER	YR.	COMMENT	BACKUP/KEY DEPTH
QB	Jacob Karam	Sr.	Transfer from Texas Tech won job in spring.	Will Gilchrist, Jr.
RB	Jerrell Rhodes	Jr.	Injuries sidelined him for all but three games last year.	Artaves Gibson, So.
WR	Kevin Wright*	So.	Leading returning receiver (398 yards, one TD).	Reggie Travis, So.
WR	Jamere Valentine	Jr.	Missed the 2011 season with a knee injury.	Marcus Rucker, Sr.
WR	Tyriq Patrick	Fr.	Caught 42 passes in run-oriented high school offense.	LaMarvin Ashley, Fr.
TE	Jesse Milleson	Jr.	Mid-term enrollee; won starting job in spring.	Alan Cross, Fr.
LT	Jordan Devey*	Sr.	Moved from RT to LT midway through 2011 season.	Taylor Fallin, Fr.
LG	Nick Chartain*	Jr.	Started 10 games last season at left guard.	Andrew Niblock, Jr.
C	A.J. Antonescu	Jr.	Started four games at center last season.	Chris Schuetz, Jr.
RG	Antonio Foster	Jr.	JC transfer; signed with Georgia Tech in 2009.	Deandra Simmons, So.
RT	Al Bond*	So.	Started final seven games of 2011 at right tackle.	Markeith Minnick, Fr.
K	Paulo Henriques*	Sr.	Made 6 of 7 field-goals attempts from inside 40 yards.	Tyler Spurlock, So.

*Returning Starter

SCOUTING REPORT: Defense

2011 stats: 191.6 ypg rushing (11th in C-USA/97th NCAA), 299.4 passing (12th/120th), 491.0 total defense (12th/117th), 35.1 ppg (10th/105th)

POS	STARTER	YR.	COMMENT	BACKUP/KEY DEPTH
DE	Khiry Battle	Sr.	Signed with Arkansas in '08; played 10 games for Hogs.	Kendrick Golden, So.
DT	Corey Jones	Jr.	Played in 12 games as a reserve in 2011.	Martin Ifedi, So.
NT	Terry Redden	So.	Saw action in eight games as a reserve last fall.	Ricky Hunter, Fr.
DE	Zach Gholson	Sr.	Forced a team-high three fumbles in 2011.	Anthony Brown, Jr.
LB	Kenyata Johnson*	Sr.	Ranked third on team with 72 tackles a year ago.	Tank Jakes, So.
LB	Charles Harris	So.	Played in 12 games as a reserve, had 33 tackles.	Ricky Holloway, Sr.
LB	Akeem Davis*	Sr.	Led team with four fumble recoveries, three INTs.	Reggis Ball, Fr.
CB	Bakari Hollier	So.	Started first three games of 2011 as a true freshman.	Derek Howard, So.
CB	Bobby McCain*	So.	Returned interception 79 yards for a TD vs. Tulane.	Chris Allen, Fr.
SS	Mitch Huelsing	Sr.	Ranked as fourth-leading tackler with 64 stops.	Lonnie Ballentine, Jr.*
FS	Cannon Smith*	Sr.	A converted QB, led team with six pass breakups in '11.	Fritz Etienne, So.
P	Tom Hornsey*	Jr.	Has averaged 42 yards per punt in first two seasons.	Austin Weaver, Sr.

*Returning Starter

TIGERS RECRUITING 2012

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Name	Pos	Ht	Wt	Stars	Hometown	School
Derrick Bobo	DB	5-8	167	✪✪	Memphis, TN	Whitehaven

All-District... Helped team to state championship game... Had over 65 tackles in each of final two seasons... Had two interceptions as a junior and three as a senior...

Name	Pos	Ht	Wt	Stars	Hometown	School
Latarius Brady	OL	6-3	255	✪✪✪	Memphis, TN	Memphis East

Played offensive and defensive tackle... Had 32 tackles (27 solo) as a senior, averaging four tackles per game... As a junior, had 47 tackles (19 solo), including 12 tackles for loss, 10 quarterback sacks.

Name	Pos	Ht	Wt	Stars	Hometown	School
Anthony Brown	DE	6-3	255	✪✪✪	Booneville, MS	NE Mississippi C.C.

Enrolled in January… As a sophomore, had 56 tackles (36 solo), including 10 tackles for loss, one pass broken up and one fumble recovery... Had 81 tackles (52 solo), three fumbles caused and two passes broken up as a freshman... Helped prep team to runner-up in state championship in 2009.

Name	Pos	Ht	Wt	Stars	Hometown	School
Fritz Etienne	DB	6-1	200	✪✪	Coffeyville, KS	Coffeyville C.C.

Enrolled in January... In 2011, had 49 tackles, seven passes broken up, four fumbles recovered and one interception... Played linebacker and defensive end at Monsignor Pace High... As a senior, had 109 tackles and 15 quarterback sacks… Helped team to three consecutive district championships.

Name	Pos	Ht	Wt	Stars	Hometown	School
Antonio Foster	OL	6-4	300	✪✪✪	Booneville, MS	NE Mississippi C.C.

Enrolled in January... MACJC All-State… NJCAA All-Region... Honorable mention NJCAA All-American... Signed with Georgia Tech in 2009 and redshirted before transferring to NEMCC.. Played at Valdosta High School... *Atlanta Journal Constitution* All-State.

Name	Pos	Ht	Wt	Stars	Hometown	School
William Gross	QB	6-1	170	✪✪✪	Memphis, TN	Melrose

Rivals.com rated No. 17 dual-threat quarterback nationally and No. 15 player in Tennessee… As a senior, completed 57 percent of passes for 1,200 yards and 22 touchdowns, before sustaining season-ending knee injury... Had 2,066 yards passing and 22 touchdowns as a junior... Had 425 all-purpose yards and five touchdowns in one game in 2010.

Name	Pos	Ht	Wt	Stars	Hometown	School
Kerwin Harrison	TE	6-3	225	✪✪✪	Lakeland, FL	Kathleen

Team captain… Had 22 receptions for 370 yards and two touchdowns as a senior... As a junior, had 26 receptions for 450 yards and four touchdowns... Participated in the FACA All-Star Game.

Name	Pos	Ht	Wt	Stars	Hometown	School
Dontavious Heard	DB	6-0	180	✪✪	Lithonia, GA	Martin Luther King

Played wide receiver and defensive back... As a senior, had 12 receptions for 170 yards and one touchdown... Had 25 tackles... Punted 40 times for more than 1,300 yards, including a long of 47 yards... Helped team to 12-1 record in 2011... Named Top Wide Receiver at Alabama MVP Camp.

Name	Pos	Ht	Wt	Stars	Hometown	School
Daniel Hurd	WR	6-2	205	✪✪✪	Memphis, TN	Wooddale

All-State... Had 50 receptions for 905 yards and 13 touchdowns as a senior... As a junior, had 700 yards receiving and nine touchdowns on 47 catches… Had five interceptions as defensive back.

Name	Pos	Ht	Wt	Stars	Hometown	School
Bronterrious Jakes	LB	6-0	225	✪✪	Goodman, MS	Holmes C.C.

Enrolled in January... Had 65 tackles (40 solo), one quarterback sack, one forced fumble and one fumble recovered in 2011... Originally signed with Arkansas State... Prepped at Central High... Rated No. 39 player in Alabama by *Rivals.com*... *Opelika-Auburn News* All-Area ... As a senior, had 110 tackles (65 solo) including three tackles for loss, six quarterback sacks and two forced fumbles.

Name	Pos	Ht	Wt	Stars	Hometown	School
***Jacob Karam**	QB	6-1	200		Friendswood, TX	Texas Tech

Graduated magna cum laude from Texas Tech and is eligible to play this season... Redshirted at Texas Tech in 2009 and played one game in 2010... Played in five games in 2011… Three-year prep starter... Threw for 3,291 yards and 38 touchdowns during his senior season.

Name	Pos	Ht	Wt	Stars	Hometown	School
Chauncey Lanier	DB	5-11	170	✪✪	Davie, FL	Nova

SunSentinel Broward County Top 50... Team captain… As a senior, had 30 tackles, 25 passes broken up and one forced fumble... Played in 2011 Broward County Athletic Association All-Star Game.

Name	Pos	Ht	Wt	Stars	Hometown	School
Paxton Lynch	QB	6-5	225	✪✪✪	Deltona, FL	Trinity Christian Academy

Missed half of senior season with knee bruise... Had 2,099 career yards passing... Central Florida All-Star Game Most Valuable Player, passing for 237 yards and three touchdowns... Had 1,082 yards passing and 10 touchdowns as a junior... Had 407 yards rushing and 16 touchdowns.

Name	Pos	Ht	Wt	Stars	Hometown	School
Hubert Mays	OL	6-5	260	✪✪	Memphis, TN	Whitehaven

Had 30 pancake blocks in final two seasons... Did not allow any quarterback sacks in final two seasons... Helped team to 14-1 record and state championship game.

Name	Pos	Ht	Wt	Stars	Hometown	School
Wynton McManis	LB	6-0	201	✪✪	Olive Branch, MS	Olive Branch

Second-team All-State... All-Region... Played quarterback and linebacker... As a senior, helped team to 17-0 record and state championship... Had 135 tackles (40 solo), including 11 tackles for loss, one interception and two forced fumbles... Averaged nine tackles per game.

Name	Pos	Ht	Wt	Stars	Hometown	School
Jesse Milleson	TE	6-4	255	✪✪✪	Glendale, AZ	Glendale C.C.

Enrolled in January... Played in seven games in 2011… Had 11 receptions for 166 yards and two touchdowns... Prep All-State… Had 28 receptions for 382 yards and two touchdowns as a senior.

Name	Pos	Ht	Wt	Stars	Hometown	School
Markeith Minnick	OL	6-6	295	✪✪✪	Chatham, VA	Hargrave Military Academy

Enrolled in January... *Rivals.com* rated No. 18 prep school player nationally… Started six games at Hargrave... Had 11 pancake blocks... Allowed no quarterback sacks as a starter... Prep All-City… Three-year team captain.

Name	Pos	Ht	Wt	Stars	Hometown	School
Carl Mitchell	DE	6-4	225	✪✪✪	Memphis, TN	Wooddale

Memphis Commercial Appeal Best of the Preps… Had over 110 tackles and 15 quarterback sacks in each of last two seasons... Had 14 total tackles and six quarterback sacks in one game.

Name	Pos	Ht	Wt	Stars	Hometown	School
Daniel Montiel	TE	6-4	240	✪✪	Arlington, TX	Arlington

All-District offensive tackle... Had 90 knockdown blocks as a senior… Second-team All-District as a junior… Had 78 knockdown blocks in 2010.

Name	Pos	Ht	Wt	Stars	Hometown	School
Chris Morley	DB	5-11	175	✪✪	Plantation, FL	South Plantation

Miami Herald second-team All-County… Team captain… As a senior, had four interceptions and 16 passes broken up... Had 55 tackles, two forced fumbles and 32 career passes broken up in prep career.

Name	Pos	Ht	Wt	Stars	Hometown	School
Leonard Pegues	LB	5-11	185	✪✪	Olive Branch, MS	Olive Branch

Had 146 tackles, four interceptions and one fumble recovered as a senior... Had 10 or more tackles in nine games in 2011... Helped team to 17-0 record and state championship.

Name	Pos	Ht	Wt	Stars	Hometown	School
Cody Quon	OL	6-5	220	✪✪	Cordova, TN	St. Benedict

Played in two games in 2011, recording three tackles, including one tackle for loss... As a junior, played in five games, finishing with one quarterback sack ... Member of basketball team.

Name	Pos	Ht	Wt	Stars	Hometown	School
Micah Simmons	OL	6-4	265	✪✪	Lindale, TX	Lindale

Honorable mention All-State... Two-time District Co-Offensive Lineman of the Year... Team captain... As a senior, helped team to regional playoffs... Lettered in football, baseball, track and powerlifting.

Name	Pos	Ht	Wt	Stars	Hometown	School
Michael Stannard	OL	6-3	325	✪✪	Columbia, MO	Rock Bridge

Columbia Tribune All-District... All-Area... Team Offensive Lineman of the Year... Had 30 career pancake blocks... Did not allow any quarterback sacks in 2011... Helped team to first playoff appearance since 2005... Two-year letterman... Member of wrestling team… Academic All-State.

Name	Pos	Ht	Wt	Stars	Hometown	School
Jai Steib	RB	5-11	220	✪✪	Palm Desert, CA	College of the Desert

Southern California Football Association All-East Conference... Had 815 yards rushing, averaging 5.5 yards per carry... Averaged 93.2 rushing yards per game... Scored 18 touchdowns... Prep All-State in Louisiana… Team captain... As a senior, had 203 yards rushing and three touchdowns... Had 515 yards rushing and 12 touchdowns as a junior... Lettered in basketball and track.

Name	Pos	Ht	Wt	Stars	Hometown	School
Anthony Watson	DB	6-1	200	✪✪	Brenham, TX	Blinn C.C.

In 2011, had 50 tackles (25 solo), including two tackles for loss, three forced fumbles and one fumble recovered... Prepped at Westfield High... Team captain... Played safety and receiver... Had seven or more tackles in seven games as a senior... Had 96 tackles (32 solo), one fumble recovered and two interceptions... Member of track team.

Name	Pos	Ht	Wt	Stars	Hometown	School
Dion Witty	DB	5-11	175	✪✪✪	Coral Springs, FL	Coral Springs

Two-time All-County… Team captain... As a senior, had 179 tackles, five forced fumbles, and nine interceptions, including four returned for touchdowns... Blocked three field goals and five punts... Returned two blocked kicks for touchdowns... Competed in the Nike South Florida All-Star Game.

A LOOK AT THE TIGERS

RESULTS

2-10, 1-7

L	MISSISSIPPI STATE	14-59
L	at Arkansas State	3-47
W	AUSTIN PEAY	27-6
L	SMU	0-42
L	at Middle Tennessee	31-38
L	at Rice	6-28
L	EAST CAROLINA	17-35
W	at Tulane	33-17
L	at UCF	0-41
L	UAB	35-41
L	MARSHALL	22-23
L	at Southern Miss	7-44

INDIVIDUAL STATS

PASSING

	Cmp	Att	Int	Pct	Yds	TD
T. Reed	169	295	4	57.3	1690	10
A. Summerlin	45	94	2	47.9	469	0

RUSHING

	Att	Yds	Avg	TD	Long
B. Foster	132	479	3.6	6	29
A. Gibson	104	316	3.0	0	31
J. Rhodes	30	152	5.1	2	22

RECEIVING

	Att	Yds	Avg	TD	Long
T. Rehrer	70	593	8.5	4	42
K. Wright	36	398	11.1	1	44
B. Foster	22	299	13.6	1	9

DEF. LEADERS

Tackles: T. Thomas 106, A. Davis 78, K. Johnson 72
Tackles for loss: F. Trotter 13, J. Farms 8.5, two tied with 8
Sacks: F. Trotter 5, J. Farms 2.5, two tied with 1.5
Interceptions: A. Davis 3, M. Huelsing 2, L. Edwards 2

SCHEDULE

Date	Opponent	'11 Record
Sept. 1	TENNESSEE-MARTIN	5-6
Sept. 8	at Arkansas State	10-3
Sept. 15	MIDDLE TENNESSEE	2-10
Sept. 22	at Duke	3-9
Oct. 6	RICE	4-8
Oct. 13	at East Carolina	5-7
Oct. 20	UCF	5-7
Oct. 27	at SMU	8-5
Nov. 3	at Marshall	7-6
Nov. 10	TULANE	2-11
Nov. 17	at UAB	3-9
Nov. 24	SOUTHERN MISS	12-2

SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI GOLDEN EAGLES

OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Rickey Bustle | **DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Tommy West** | **STADIUM: M.M. Roberts Stadium: 36,000**

AT A GLANCE

RECORD:
12-2, 6-2 C-USA (1st, East)

COACH:
Ellis Johnson — At Southern Miss: 1st year; overall: 17-28, 4 years

RETURNING STARTERS:
11; 6 offense, 4 defense, punter

PLAYERS TO WATCH:
RB Kendrick Hardy, WR/KR Tracey Lampley, OL Joe Duhon, C Austin Quattrochi, LB/DE Jamie Collins, CB Deron Wilson

PRIMARY STRENGTHS:
The Golden Eagles return the interior of the offensive line, anchored by center Austin Quattrochi. It should give a new starting quarterback some peace of mind as he learns Johnson's spread attack. Wilson had four interceptions last season, two of which he returned for scores.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS:
First-year defensive coordinator Tommy West, a former Clemson and Memphis coach, will have to work quickly to familiarize seven new starters with his 4-3 look. Offensively, veteran QB Austin Davis graduated and there's no quarterback with appreciable experience. Top RB Jamal Woodyard will miss the season with a knee injury.

KEY LOSSES:
QB Austin Davis, WR Kevin Bolden, WR Ryan Ballentine, DE Cordarro Law, LB Ronnie Thornton, K Danny Hrapmann

OVERVIEW:
Johnson faces a challenging first year at Southern Miss. Thirteen starters left last season along with coach Larry Fedora, who accepted the North Carolina job after winning a C-USA title. Expect a rare down year for the Golden Eagles, which means a middle-of-the-road finish in the league.

Earning 19th Straight Winning Season Will Be Hard

Coming off a record-breaking season, Southern Miss finds itself in rebuilding mode.

Gone is successful coach Larry Fedora, who accepted the North Carolina job after leading the Golden Eagles to a school-record 12-win season and their fifth Conference USA title, including their first since the league began divisional play in 2005.

Replacing Fedora will be veteran college assistant Ellis Johnson, who was a member of former Southern Miss coach Curley Hallman's staff in the late 1980s.

Johnson will attempt to keep a remarkable streak alive. The Golden Eagles have had 18 consecutive winning seasons; producing a 19th will require some effective first-year coaching.

Southern Miss must replace veteran quarterback Austin Davis, who threw for 3,496 yards and 30 touchdowns a year ago. They also must find a dependable running back to fill in for Jamal Woodyard, the team's leading rusher who will miss the season with a knee injury sustained in the Hawaii Bowl victory over Nevada.

New defensive coordinator Tommy West takes over a traditionally strong Southern Miss unit, but the Eagles must replace seven starters.

Johnson is excited about returning to a head-coaching role, which he last held at The Citadel in 2003. He spent the past four seasons as Steve Spurrier's defensive coordinator at South Carolina.

"I learned from Coach Spurrier (that) when you take on a task such as this, you want to study the history of the program and you want to try and find something that has not been done before," Johnson said.

"Frankly, there is very little left. It's intimidating, but it's also challenging. But if I could tell you one thing that is going to drive me as a head coach, I want to take the Golden Eagles to a BCS bowl game and win."

OFFENSE

Southern Miss had the second-most productive offense in the conference a year ago, ranking behind the gaudy, Case Keenum-driven offensive numbers at Houston.

Southern Miss averaged 461.4 yards and 36.9 points per game, but matching those will be difficult. Quarterback Chris Campbell, a redshirt junior, has yet to take a snap in his career. Next in line is redshirt freshman Ricky Lloyd.

Campbell's development was delayed a year ago by a shoulder injury that kept him from getting his share of practice time as the backup.

At running back, Jamal Woodyard's knee injury was a huge blow to the ground game. He rushed for 732 yards, averaging 6.7 per carry. Without him, Southern Miss will look to senior Desmond Johnson and juniors Jeremy Hester and Kendrick Hardy.

Hester (5-6, 180) had a solid spring practice and earned Johnson's respect. Hardy is a dependable veteran who averaged 5.9 yards per carry in 2011.

Among Johnson's priorities will be finding replacements for receivers Kevin Bolden and Ryan Balentine, who combined for 107 catches for more than 1,400 yards and 15 touchdowns.

Electrifying all-purpose performer Tracey Lampley should be a go-to player in coordinator Rickey Bustle's spread offense. Lampley (5-9, 170) was second on the team in rushing (463 yards, three touchdowns) and third in receiving (574 yards, four touchdowns) last fall. Converted tight end Markese Triplett (6-4, 210) could also be a factor.

The Golden Eagles boast experience on the line, where center Austin Quattrochi and guards Joe Duhon and

Darius Barnes return. Quattrochi is considered one of the top centers in C-USA.

The left tackle spot will be handled by sixth-year senior Jason Weaver, another comforting situation for the team's young quarterbacks.

DEFENSE

Tommy West, who is a close friend of Johnson, becomes a coordinator in C-USA for the third time. After serving in that capacity at Memphis (2000) and UAB (2011), West takes over a Southern Miss defense that ranked third in the league a year ago.

Gone is most of the front seven and two defensive backs, but this program has consistently regrouped in short order.

End Jamie Collins, who possesses a freakish combination of power and speed, will be a candidate for league Defensive Player of the Year honors after amassing 19.5 tackles for lost yardage and six sacks a year ago. He also returned an interception 97 yards for a score.

Junior cornerback Deron Wilson picked off four passes and returned two for touchdowns. Wilson has picked off seven passes in the past two seasons.

Newcomers to the starting lineup will have to produce, too. Linebacker Alan Howze, a converted running back, made 22 tackles in a reserve role last year. He'll be called upon to make the defensive calls.

"Alan has stepped in and become a good defensive quarterback for us," Johnson said.

Up front, Rakeem Nunez-Roches provides the defense with a powerful tackle to complement nose tackle Khalid Wilson. Nunez-Roches is 6-3, 312, but is also extremely quick. Johnson admired his ability in the spring to pick up the system.

Junior end Octavius Thomas is a speedy pass rusher who could potentially become a factor if he can overcome his reputation as an underachiever. He will battle sophomore Dasman McCullum for the starting job.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Tracey Lampley averaged a conference-best 11.5 yards on his 31 punt returns, one of which he returned for a score, last season. He also ran back a team-high 19 kickoffs, averaging 21.3 yards. Jeremy Hester emerged as kick returner, averaging 27.6 yards on 11 attempts.

The kicking game will undergo a slight revision. Gone is Danny Hrapmann, who led C-USA with 23 field goals, leaving the job to Corey Acosta. Acosta, a sophomore, converted both his field-goal attempts in relief of Hrapmann last year, including a 42-yarder.

Veteran Peter Boehme will handle the punting duties. He ranked third in the conference with an average of 43 yards per punt.

— Phil Stukenborg

Tracey Lampley
Photo by Thomas B. Shea/Icon SMI

SCOUTING REPORT: Offense

2011 stats: 205.1 ypg rushing (1st in C-USA/20th NCAA), 256.2 passing (4th/34th), 461.4 total offense (2nd/17th), 36.9 ppg (2nd/14th)

POS	STARTER	YR.	COMMENT	BACKUP/KEY DEPTH
QB	Chris Campbell	Jr.	Will be making his college debut this season.	Ricky Lloyd, Fr.
RB	Desmond Johnson	Sr.	Missed seven games in 2011 with knee injury.	Kendrick Hardy, Jr.
WR	Dominique Sullivan*	Jr.	Caught 32 passes for 461 yards last fall.	Francisco Llanos, Jr.
WR	Tracey Lampley*	Sr.	No. 2 rusher and No. 3 receiver for Golden Eagles.	Justin Sims, Jr.
WR	Quentin Pierce	Sr.	Had 17 catches for 166 yards in '11.	Markese Triplett, Jr.
TE	Ryan Hanks*	Sr.	One of six returning starters on offense.	Max Mason, Fr.
LT	Jason Weaver	Sr.	Moves over from right tackle.	Dyron White, Sr.
LG	Joe Duhon*	Sr.	A preseason all-conference candidate.	Taylor Peterson, So.
C	Austin Quattrochi*	Sr.	Considered one of top three centers in C-USA.	Jonathan Guerry, Jr.
RG	Darius Barnes*	Sr.	Ex-defensive lineman has blossomed on offensive line.	Ed Preston, Jr.
RT	Vincent Brown	Jr.	Athletic offensive lineman with a mean streak.	David Fowler, So.
K	Corey Acosta	So.	Moves into Danny Hrapmann's role, limited work in '11.	Jordan Parker, Fr.

*Returning Starter

SCOUTING REPORT: Defense

2011 stats: 118.6 ypg rushing (3rd in C-USA/24th NCAA), 224.4 passing (5th/62nd), 343.0 total defense (3rd/29th), 20.8 ppg (2nd/26th)

POS	STARTER	YR.	COMMENT	BACKUP/KEY DEPTH
DE	Dasman McCullum	So.	Was first-team all-state as a high school senior.	Octavius Thomas, Jr.
DT	Khyri Thornton	Jr.	Is a natural pass rusher; nine tackles for loss in 2011.	Adam Williams, Jr.
NT	Rakeem Nunez-Roches	So.	Powerful lineman with quick feet.	Khalid Wilson, Sr.
DE	Jamie Collins*	Sr.	One of league's top defenders, had 19.5 TFL in '11.	Brandon Francesconi, Sr.
LB	Dylan Reda	Jr.	JC transfer won starting job in the spring.	Terrick Wright, Fr.
LB	Alan Howze	Jr.	Is a converted running back.	Chauncey Smith, Fr.
LB	Jerrion Johnson*	Jr.	Played in 11 games, started eight in 2011.	Justin Penn, So.
CB	Alexander Walters	Jr.	Rising junior played in 14 games as a reserve a year ago.	Marcal Robinson, Sr.
CB	Deron Wilson*	Jr.	Led team with four interceptions for 114 return yards.	Ed Wilkins, Fr.
FS	Alex Smith	Jr.	Appeared in 14 games as a backup, had 17 stops.	Martez Thompson, Sr.
SS	Jacorius Cotton*	Jr.	Tied for second in tackles (98) last year with Collins.	Emmanuel Johnson, So.
P	Peter Boehme*	Sr.	Averaged 43 yards per punt.	Matthew Moseley, So.

*Returning Starter

GOLDEN EAGLES RECRUITING 2012

rivals.com

Name	Pos	Ht	Wt	Stars	Hometown	School
Jarell Aaron	WR	6-5	205	✪✪	Poplarville, MS	Poplarville
As a senior, had 32 receptions for 599 yards, including one for 54 yards, and scored six touchdowns... Member of track team... Ranked second in Mississippi in triple jump and high jump competitions.						
Anthony Alford	QB	6-1	205	✪✪✪✪	Petal, MS	Petal
Rivals.com rated No. 5 dual-threat quarterback nationally and No. 2 player in Mississippi... Two-time Mississippi Gatorade Player of the Year... *Jackson Clarion-Ledger* All-State... *Hattiesburg American* All-Area... Led team to state championship game as a senior... Had 2,058 yards passing and 20 touchdowns with nine interceptions... Had 1,731 yards rushing and 24 touchdowns... Participated in the U.S. Army All-American Bowl... Played in Under Armour Baseball All-American Game.						
Oliver Bates	OL	6-5	285	✪✪	Tylertown, MS	Tylertown
McComb Enterprise-Journal All-Area... All-District... Helped team to 11-2 record... Participated in 61st Bernard Blackwell North/South All-Star Classic.						
Tyre Bracken	RB	5-9	180	✪✪	White Castle, LA	White Castle
All-State... *Baton Rouge Advocate* All-Area... As a senior, had 172 carries for 1,888 yards and 21 touchdowns... Had more than 3,200 yards rushing and 40 touchdowns as a junior ... Helped team to state championship as a junior.						
Cedric Chisolm	OL	6-5	275	✪✪✪	Louisburg, NC	Louisburg C.C.
Spent one year on the offensive line... All-Northeast Conference as a freshman ... Has three years of eligibility.						
Dalvin Craft	DT	6-3	285	✪✪	Atmore, AL	Escambia County
As a junior, had 15 tackles for loss and six quarterback sacks... Also a member of the basketball team.						
Lelland Ducksworth	LB	6-1	215	✪✪✪	Hattiesburg, MS	North Forest
Ranked No. 65 outside linebacker nationally and No. 17 player in Mississippi by Rivals.com... *Jackson Clarion-Ledger* Top 40 in Mississippi... *Hattiesburg American* All-Area... Had 61 tackles, including four tackles for loss, one interception and seven passes broken up as a senior... Had 306 yards rushing and one touchdown.						
Brandon Farmer	OL	6-3	290	✪✪	Gulfport, MS	Harrison Central
Sun Herald All-South Mississippi... Helped team average almost 300 yards per game... Participated in the Mississippi-Alabama All-Star Game.						
Wil Freeman	DE	6-6	225	✪✪✪	Flowood, MS	Northwest Rankin
Clarion-Ledger Top 40 in Mississippi... As a senior, helped team to 11-2 record... Had 86 tackles, 12 quarterback sacks, one interception and one blocked punt... Participated in the Mississippi-Alabama All-Star Game... Member of the basketball team.						
Roderick Henderson	DT	6-2	320	✪✪	Montgomery, AL	Carver
Four-year starter... Had 72 tackles and eight quarterback sacks as a senior.						
De-Ante Lawrence	ATH	6-2	207	✪✪✪	Prattville, AL	Prattville
All-City... All-County... All-Metro... As a senior, had 44 tackles and one interception... Had 251 yards rushing and five touchdowns... Helped team to state championship... Played in the Mississippi-Alabama All-Star game... Three-year member of basketball team.						
Jerry McCorvey	LB	6-3	220	✪✪	Vancleave, MS	Vancleave
Had a team-high 116 tackles as a senior... As a junior, had 143 tackles... Participated in the Bernard Blackwell North-South All-Star Classic.						
DeBarrius Miller	DB	5-11	175	✪✪	Fort Valley, GA	Peach County
Played offense and defense in high school, but will play defense for Southern Mississippi.						
Calvin Perry	LB	6-2	220	✪✪✪	Hoover, AL	Bessemer Academy
Rivals.com rated No. 38 player in Alabama... As a senior, had 81 tackles, seven quarterback sacks and one interception... Had 70 tackles, including 11 tackles for loss, seven quarterback sacks and two interceptions as a junior... Had 32 receptions for 417 yards and six touchdowns.						
Dylan Reda	LB	6-3	235	✪✪	Santa Ana, CA	Santa Ana C.C.
Two-time All-East Conference... Team Defensive Most Valuable Player... Had 174 career tackles, 10 quarterback sacks, and returned a fumble recovery 77 yards for a touchdown... Prepped at San Clemente High School... All-County... All-Conference... Had 130 career tackles and 10 quarterback sacks... Three-year letterman.						
Keithon Redding	WR	6-0	190	✪✪✪	Decatur, GA	Columbia
Ranked No. 75 wide receiver nationally and No. 50 player in Georgia by Rivals.com... Had 25 receptions for 442 yards and five touchdowns as a senior.						
Kalan Reed	DB	5-11	175	✪✪✪	Birmingham, AL	Briarwood Christian
As a senior, had 29 tackles, two interceptions and seven passes broken up.						
Jalen Richard	RB	5-8	192	✪✪	Alexandria, LA	Peabody
Had 2,289 yards rushing and 33 touchdowns on 263 carries as a junior.						
Kyle Sloter	QB	6-5	200	✪✪	Atlanta, GA	Mt Pisgah Christian
Two-time All-State... As a senior, completed 123 of 214 passes for 1,808 yards and 14 touchdowns... Had 507 yards rushing and six touchdowns.						
Stanley Tart	TE	6-4	230	✪✪✪	Pensacola, FL	Escambia
Two-way prep starter; outstanding defensive end... Considered in athlete category, but recruited as tight end by Southern Miss.						
Antonio Thomas	DB	5-10	193	✪✪✪	Memphis, TN	Whitehaven
Memphis Commercial Appeal second-team All-District.						
D.J. Thompson	WR	6-4	190	✪✪✪	Pearl, MS	Pearl
Ranked No. 21 player in Mississippi by Rivals.com... *Jackson Clarion-Ledger* Top 40 in Mississippi... Had 59 receptions for 773 yards and 12 touchdowns as a senior... Returned 16 punts for 264 yards, with a long of 68... Had seven kickoff returns for 169 yards... Had one interception... Participated in the Mississippi-Alabama All-Star Game.						
Marcus Turner	DB	6-0	195	✪✪	McCalla, AL	McAdory
Started every game since his freshman season.						
Adam Williams	DE	6-3	255	✪✪✪	Clarksdale, MS	Coahoma C.C.
Played two years at Coahoma... Prepped at Rosa Fort High School... As a senior, helped team to state playoffs... Had at least two games with 12 or more tackles... Had two quarterback sacks in one game.						
Anthony Wilson	DE	6-3	235	✪✪✪	Ellisville, MS	Jones County J.C.
Originally signed with Southern Miss in 2010... Had 36 tackles, including three tackles for loss, six quarterback sacks and one forced fumble at Jones County... Prepped at Midfield (Ala.) High School... Moved to Alabama from New Orleans following Hurricane Katrina.						

A LOOK AT THE GOLDEN EAGLES

RESULTS

	12-2, 6-2	
W	LOUISIANA TECH	19-17
L	at Marshall	20-26
W	SE LOUISIANA	52-6
W	at Virginia	30-24
W	RICE	48-24
W	at Navy	63-35
W	SMU	27-3
W	at UTEP	31-13
W	at East Carolina	48-28
W	UCF	30-29
L	at UAB	31-34
W	MEMPHIS	44-7
	C-USA Championship Game	
W	vs. Houston	49-28
	Hawaii Bowl	
W	vs. Nevada	24-17

INDIVIDUAL STATS

PASSING

	Cmp	Att	Int	Pct	Yds	TD
A. Davis	286	475	11	60.2	3496	30
Q. Pierce	3	7	1	42.9	45	1

RUSHING

	Att	Yds	Avg	TD	Long
J. Woodyard	110	732	6.7	3	68
T. Lampley	91	463	5.1	3	28
K. Hardy	72	426	5.9	2	47

RECEIVING

	Att	Yds	Avg	TD	Long
K. Bolden	58	671	11.6	7	60
R. Balentine	49	742	15.1	8	77
T. Lampley	47	574	12.2	4	61

DEF. LEADERS

Tackles: R. Thornton 111, J. Collins 98, J. Cotton 98
Tackles for loss: C. Law 22, J. Collins 19.5, K. Thornton 9
Sacks: C. Law 9.5, J. Collins 6.5, D. Jones 2.5
Interceptions: D. Wilson 4, M. Wheaton 3, K. Williams 3

SCHEDULE

Date	Opponent	'11 Record
Sept. 1	at Nebraska	9-4
Sept. 15	EAST CAROLINA	5-7
Sept. 22	at Western Kentucky	7-5
Sept. 29	LOUISVILLE	7-6
Oct. 6	BOISE STATE	12-1
Oct. 13	at UCF	5-7
Oct. 20	MARSHALL	7-6
Oct. 27	at Rice	4-8
Nov. 3	UAB	3-9
Nov. 10	at SMU	8-5
Nov. 17	UTEP	5-7
Nov. 24	at Memphis	2-10

TULANE GREEN WAVE

OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Eric Price **DEFENSIVE COORDINATORS: Jon Sumrall and Lionel Washington** **STADIUM: Louisiana Superdome: 69,703**

AT A GLANCE

RECORD:
2-11 overall; 1-7 C-USA (6th, West Division)

COACH:
Curtis Johnson — At Tulane and overall: 1st year

RETURNING STARTERS:
13; 6 offense, 5 defense, punter, kicker

PLAYERS TO WATCH:
RB Orleans Darkwa, TE Matt Marfisi, DE Austen Jacks, LB Trent Mackey, CB Ryan Travis

PRIMARY STRENGTHS:
The Green Wave's deepest and most talented position is running back. Linebacker is another strength, led in the middle by Mackey, who finished second in the league in tackles in 2011 with 145. The excitement of a new coach could count for something.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS:
Tulane has depth issues on both lines, but the primary concern is the wide receiver group. The Green Wave had trouble running routes and gaining separation to feed the passing game last season; without that threat, defenses loaded the box to contain Tulane's run. The defense lost three seniors off the line, which is a formidable problem, as well.

KEY LOSSES:
OG Harris Howard, LT Pat Husain, DE Dezman Moses, DT Chris Asumnu, DT Cedric Wilson, CB Jordan Sullen

OVERVIEW:
Tulane returns largely the same skill personnel as last season — the key difference is the coaching change. Johnson was hired in December to replace interim coach Mark Hutson, who took over when Bob Toledo resigned under pressure in October. A talented crop of freshmen, including cornerback Darion Monroe, arrive this fall to bolster the team, but Johnson's biggest task will be playing the hand he has been dealt.

Johnson Returns to the Bayou to Lead the Green Wave

Huge changes have arrived, the most profound being a coaching switch that gives the Green Wave its first African-American head football coach — former New Orleans Saints wide receiver coach Curtis Johnson.

Johnson wears a national championship ring from 2001, when he was an assistant at Miami, as well as the Super Bowl ring he earned in 2010 with the Saints.

This is his first stint as a head coach — but the early returns appear to be promising considering player enthusiasm and fan feedback.

Johnson has moved Tulane from the West Coast offense it used under Bob Toledo for four and a half seasons and implemented a more pro-style multiple scheme that is heavy on screen passing and personnel packages for running backs.

"I think it's going to come to two things. I think it's going to come down to how much we can adapt offensively to what we are doing and (quarterback Ryan) Griffin," Johnson said.

"I think if Griffin does a good job, we should improve. And he's really improved. I think we have a pretty functional and good offense."

Johnson retained only two members off the former staff — Doug Lichtenberger, who moved from tight ends/recruiting coordinator to assistant athletic director for football operations/recruiting, and Jason Rollins, who was kept as a secondary coach.

Lionel Washington, a longtime NFL secondary coach, will be calling the defensive plays, but he co-coordinates with Jon Sumrall, Tulane's new line coach. The duo has a nifty 3-4 scheme they will mix in with their base 4-3 — something that utilizes the Green Wave's versatile edge players.

The biggest question is whether Johnson can do what no coach has done since 2002 — guide Tulane to a bowl game. One thing is for sure: Johnson is thrilled to be the Green Wave's 39th head coach.

"It's like you can't map out your life, but this would be the life I would map out for anybody," Johnson said.

"You are in your hometown where you won a Super Bowl. You are on your way up. They are building you a new stadium that you are going to be able to play in. So all this stuff — you couldn't write a better script."

OFFENSE

The Green Wave again has a deep and talented group of running backs, led by Orleans Darkwa, who is healthy after playing banged up through the 2011 season.

Darkwa rushed for 924 yards on 210 carries for 13 touchdowns in 2011 after partially tearing a ligament in his toe. He said he wasn't able to pivot and gain the same explosiveness he did during this freshman campaign in 2010, when he ran for 925 yards. Darkwa has completely healed and should lead C-USA in rushing in 2012.

Darkwa and backups Dante' Butler and Robert Kelley will be running behind a youthful offensive line that is particularly untested on the left side.

But the biggest questions with the offense reside in the passing game. The Green Wave managed only 21.1 points per game in 2011 — a paltry number considering it faced so many porous Conference USA defenses.

The receiving unit is a concern, John-

son said, and he hopes to see Griffin pull all the pieces together at quarterback. Griffin passed for 2,502 yards on 227 of 408 passing, but he threw 10 interceptions compared to 13 touchdowns.

"I pictured one thing (about Griffin) from watching tape, but I see a totally different guy when I was watching the spring game," Johnson said. "He just didn't make very many mistakes. If he doesn't make mistakes, I think we're going to do well."

The tight ends dropped a lot of passes in the spring game — another point of concern considering how much Johnson uses tight ends in the passing game.

DEFENSE

Co-defensive coordinators Jon Sumrall and Lionel Washington have simplified the 4-3 scheme, and the players expressed excitement about the change.

There are huge depth issues on the line, where Tulane lost three starting seniors, including pro prospect defensive end Dezman Moses. Austen Jacks is left as the most experienced lineman at right end.

Linebacker is the biggest strength on Tulane's defense, and the centerpiece of that group is senior middle linebacker Trent Mackey. Mackey led the team with 145 tackles in 2011.

But the secondary is still unsettled despite having cornerback Ryan Travis, who picked off four passes in 2011. Among the issues: Cornerback Jordan Sullen, a rising senior, left school this winter after committing a breach of university policy.

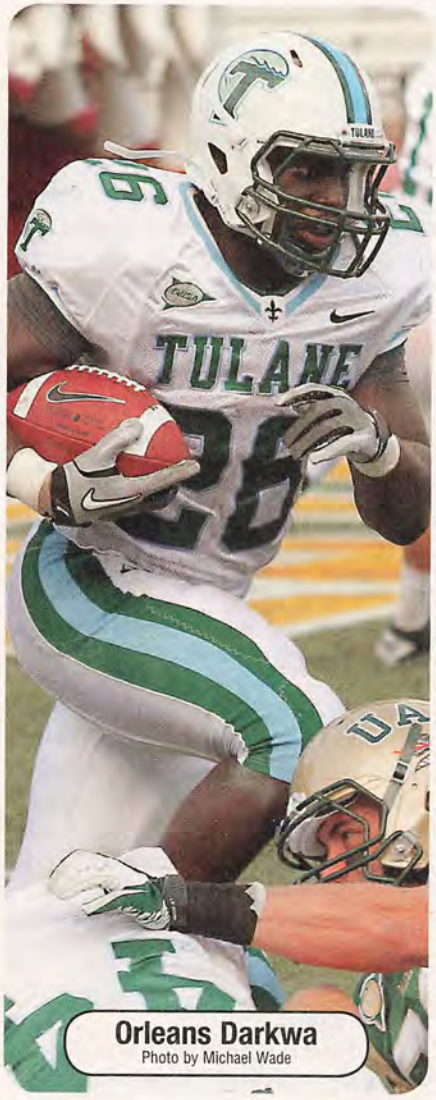
"I'm not happy with depth in the secondary," Johnson said. "I would say out of the whole defense I don't have a clear picture of what it's going to look like. I just have bits and pieces."

SPECIAL TEAMS

Kickoff return is a strength. Robert Kelley and Dante' Butler averaged 20.4 and 20.6 yards a return last season, respectively, with Kelley doing much of the work (64 returns for 1,305 yards).

The squad also returns seasoned placekicker Cairo Santos. But kickoff and punt coverage continued to plague the Green Wave in 2011. That will be a huge focus for new special teams coordinator Barry Lamb.

— Tammy Nunez



Orleans Darkwa
Photo by Michael Wade

SCOUTING REPORT: Offense

2011 stats: 126.3 ypg rushing (8th in C-USA/86th in NCAA), 214.0 passing (9th/71st); 340.3 total offense (10th/97th), 21.1 ppg (10th, 105th)

POS	STARTER	YR.	COMMENT	BACKUP/KEY DEPTH
QB	Ryan Griffin*	Sr.	Needs to be better after ranking 97th in passing efficiency.	Leon Blouin IV, Fr.
TB	Orleans Darkwa*	Jr.	Recovered from toe ligament injury; poised for great season.	Dante' Butler, So.
FB	Stephen Barnett	Sr.	Successfully transitioned from TB. An all-around back.	Taylor Bullock, So.
WR	Ryan Grant	Jr.	Explosive speed; missed almost all of 2011 (sports hernia).	Brent Comardelle, Jr.
WR	Wilson Van Hooser*	Jr.	Could become a dependable short-to-mid-range WR.	Justyn Shackleford, So.
TE	Matt Marfisi*	So.	Physical specimen (6-6, 250); needs to hone receiving skills.	Evan Tatford, So.
LT	Nate Skold	Fr.	Still learning the ropes and was exposed some in the spring.	Arturo Uzdavinis, Fr.
LG	Adam Skidmore	So.	Tough, feisty player who will have to grow up fast.	Mike Henry, Jr.
C	Zach Morgan*	Sr.	Versatile, experienced; has been an OG most of his career.	Mike Henry, Jr.
RG	Rio Mares	Jr.	Has been mostly a back-up, but his experience will matter.	Mike Henry, Jr.
RT	Eric Jones*	Sr.	Jones is the linchpin on the line — big and strong.	Sean Donnelly, So.
K	Cairo Santos*	Jr.	Experienced kicker who is poised for breakout season.	Ryan Rome, Jr.

*Returning Starter

SCOUTING REPORT: Defense

2011 stats: 164.9 ypg rushing (6th in C-USA/83rd in NCAA), 245.4 passing (6th/87th), 410.3 total defense (7th/83rd), 37.5 ppg (12th, 115th)

POS	STARTER	YR.	COMMENT	BACKUP/KEY DEPTH
DE	Michael Pierce Jr.	So.	Pierce can play every spot up front as well as linebacker.	Aaron Bryant, Fr.
DT	Julius Warmsley	So.	Brings a lot of experience to a relatively untested unit.	Devin Williams, Jr.
NT	Kenny Welcome	So.	In a fierce positional battle with backup Redwine.	Corey Redwine, Fr.
DE	Austen Jacks*	Sr.	Vastly improved his run-stopping skills last year.	Wendell Beckwith, Jr.
LB	Darryl Farley*	Sr.	The brains of the defense, helping organize and adjust.	Ray Oppman, So.
LB	Trent Mackey*	Sr.	Tulane's best defender and its returning leading tackler.	Zach Davis, Jr.
LB	Matthew Bailey	So.	A rising star with a high motor and keen instincts.	Logan Hamilton, Jr.
CB	Jordan Batiste	Fr.	Enrolled in January and made good use of spring ball.	Alex Lauricella, Sr.
CB	Ryan Travis*	Sr.	Secondary's best player despite slight frame (6-0, 172).	L.J. Parker, Fr.
SS	Shakiel Smith*	Sr.	Most experienced DB on team; a locker room leader.	Sam Scofield, So.
FS	Kyle Davis	Jr.	Inconsistent last season but looked stronger this spring.	Brandon LeBeau, So.
P	Jonathan Ginsburgh*	Jr.	Made improvements in '11; could still use confidence boost.	Steve Purcell, Sr.

*Returning Starter

UAB BLAZERS

OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Jeff Brohm | **DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Reggie Johnson** | **STADIUM: Legion Field (71,594)**

AT A GLANCE

2011:
3-9, 3-5 (C-USA T-4th, East)

COACH:
Garrick McGee — At UAB and overall: 1st year

RETURNING STARTERS:
11; 6 offense, 4 defense, kicker

PLAYERS TO WATCH:
QB Jonathan Perry, WR Jackie Williams, RB Greg Franklin, OT Chris Hubbard, LB Marvin Burdette, CB Cornelius Richards, DE Diaheem Watkins, DT Connor Boyett

PRIMARY STRENGTHS:
The Blazers are blessed with four solid running backs and a deep group of playmaking receivers. On defense, Burdette leads a deep group of linebackers.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS:
Hubbard is the lone experienced offensive lineman, and the Blazers don't have a proven backup at quarterback if Perry gets hurt. The situation in the secondary is scary with few proven players.

KEY LOSSES:
OT Matt McCants, C Darion Smith, CB Marquis Coleman, S Jamie Bender

OVERVIEW:
McGee brought an unprecedented amount of enthusiasm to a program that has been spinning its wheels since playing in the 2004 Hawaii Bowl. Six wins and bowl eligibility would be a huge leap for the program.

McGee Bringing New Hope to Struggling UAB

What head coach Garrick McGee saw from his team during his first spring practice at UAB didn't meet his expectations.

In this case, that was a good thing.

"When you read about a team that hasn't had a winning season in a while, you think you're going into a situation where you have to go and regroup and recruit players," McGee said.

"But once we got going (in spring practice), I saw we've got a lot of really good players on this team."

The 38-year-old McGee made his name in the college coaching world on the offensive side of the ball. His specialty is coaching quarterbacks, and he spent the past four seasons under Bobby Petrino at Arkansas, including the last two as the Razorbacks' offensive coordinator.

He inherits a UAB program that never had a winning season under Neil Callaway and hasn't finished above .500 since the Hawaii Bowl team in 2004. Callaway and his staff didn't leave the cupboard empty, but the roster does have some holes.

It will take a couple of recruiting classes to plug all the holes, but McGee still generated a buzz about the program that may be unprecedented in the 20 years that UAB has played football.

OFFENSE

One of the best things about the offense installed by McGee and offensive coordinator Jeff Brohm is that it's truly designed to take what the defense is giving up. That's an advantage considering the Blazers have an experienced quarterback, a large group of talented receivers and a stable of quality running backs.

All of that might not matter, though, if the offensive line doesn't jell quickly.

Quick tackle Chris Hubbard has all-conference ability, but no one else is proven up front. UAB has some quality linemen but, for the most part, they are young. The offensive line blocked well in the running game during spring practice but struggled at times while pass blocking.

"I think obviously, up front is where games are won and lost," Brohm said.

"I think we've got a couple capable guys and we have some other young guys who have to step up and we have to develop their skills. You have to be good up front in order for your skill guys to perform and make plays."

Quarterback Jonathan Perry is more of a passer than a runner, but he can make plays with his feet when necessary. He started eight games last season, throwing for 2,042 yards with 10 touchdowns and eight interceptions. He should be more comfortable after a year on the field.

It is unsettling that UAB doesn't have any experience at quarterback behind Perry.

UAB has plenty of options at receiver. Junior Jackie Williams had 88 catches in his first two seasons. Seniors Nick Adams and Patrick Hearn, and sophomores D.J. Vinson and Jay Davis, are dependable targets. No one on the team is faster than sophomore Jamarcus Nelson.

Tight ends Kennard Backman and Nolen Smith also figure into the passing game.

The biggest question at running back is who will get the bulk of the carries. Junior Greg Franklin was the team's leading rusher last season, with sophomore Darrin Reaves next in line.

Senior Dontavius Jackson is an excellent short-yardage option, and redshirt freshman Bashr Coles has the best combination of size and speed.

DEFENSE

The defense is built around middle linebacker Marvin Burdette's ability

to make tackles. The 5-11, 230-pound Burdette has 249 career tackles, which is 123 short of tying Zac Woodfin's school record. He should be better than ever after shedding more than 20 pounds since last season.

He's joined at linebacker by a group of experienced players, and the Blazers also could receive some help from the incoming signing class.

Senior Greg Irvin had 66 tackles in his first year as a starter last season and also chipped in with five fumble recoveries. Junior Patrick Bastien had a strong spring practice, and no linebacker is more capable of making big plays than senior D.A. Autry.

The defensive front took a huge step forward in the spring and needs to continue the improvement this fall. Defensive end Diaheem Watkins, who had three sacks in the spring game, is such a disruptive force that McGee said during the spring that "it's hard for me to call plays knowing that he can be isolated" on the weak side.

It also helps that Connor Boyett, a two-year starter at defensive end, slid over to tackle, giving UAB speed and quickness inside.

"This year, we're in your face and we want to get the pressure," Watkins said. "It's all about being aggressive this year, getting up the field instead of just reading."

The Blazers also appear to be deeper up front than expected. Micky Jackson is pushing starter Deric Scott at nose tackle, and Jewel Christian will give Boyett some rest.

Now for the biggest question mark defensively: Cornelius Richards is the only experienced cornerback, and Calvin Jones is the lone safety with significant experience.

It appeared during spring practice that UAB had some talent in the secondary, but it is far from seasoned.

"We got two really good coaches back there, so I think we'll be fine," McGee said of safeties coach Brandon Sharp and cornerbacks coach Anthony Blevins.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Ty Long stepped in as a true freshman and cured the field-goal kicking woes UAB faced the previous season. He made 16 of 19 field-goal attempts, including the game-winner against C-USA champion Southern Miss, and made all but one extra point. He did struggle at times on his kickoffs and needs to improve in that area.

Hunter Mullins steps in for dependable punter Trey Ragland. Mullins has a stronger leg, but needs to be more consistent. Jamarcus Nelson is a dangerous kick returner and Jackie Williams is a solid punt returner.

— Steve Irvine

Marvin Burdette
Photo by Michael Wade

SCOUTING REPORT: Offense

2011 stats: 129.4 ypg rushing (7th in C-USA/84th in NCAA), 234.6 passing (7th/60th), 364.0 total offense (8th/81st), 20.2 ppg (11th/108th)

POS	STARTER	YR.	COMMENT	BACKUP/KEY DEPTH
QB	Jonathan Perry*	Jr.	Fits perfectly into the new offense.	Austin Brown, Fr.
RB	Greg Franklin*	Jr.	Shifty runner with the ability to run tough.	Bashr Coles, Fr.
WR	Jackie Williams*	Jr.	Made a team high 58 catches last season.	Jay Davis, So.
WR	Jamarcus Nelson	So.	Fastest player on the team.	D.J. Vinson, So.
WR	Nick Adams*	Sr.	Sixth-year senior is a deep threat.	Patrick Hearn, Sr.
TE	Kennard Backman*	So.	Needs to step up his production.	Nolen Smith, Jr.
QT	Chris Hubbard*	Sr.	Legitimate all-conference candidate.	Cameron Blankenship, Fr.
QG	Cody Payne	Sr.	Converted DL is a question mark.	Uneik Crumbley, Fr.
C	John Hix	So.	Needs to play bigger than his size.	Dominic Sylvester, So.
SG	Brian O'Leary	So.	Must play like a veteran.	Hayden Naumann, Fr.
ST	Kaycee Ike	Jr.	Seldom used until this season.	Wesley Carter, Fr.
K	Ty Long*	So.	Had a steady freshman season.	Colin Anderson, Fr.

*Returning Starter

SCOUTING REPORT: Defense

2011 stats: 203.3 ypg rushing (12th in C-USA/103rd in NCAA), 282.3 passing (10th/114th); 485.6 total defense (11th/114th), 36.8 ppg (11th/110th)

POS	STARTER	YR.	COMMENT	BACKUP/KEY DEPTH
DE	Diaheem Watkins*	So.	Could be the most improved C-USA player.	Trey Grissett, So.
DT	Connor Boyett*	Jr.	Moved to DT to provide speed inside.	Jewel Christian, Jr.
NT	Deric Scott	Jr.	Time to step up his play.	Micky Jackson, So.
DE	Chris Walton	So.	Provides good speed on the edge.	Jamie Onufrak, So.
LB	Patrick Bastien	Jr.	Uses his speed to make plays.	Desmond Wills, Fr.
LB	Marvin Burdette*	Sr.	Could become UAB's all-time leading tackler.	Jesse Parrish, Jr.
LB	Greg Irvin*	Sr.	Provides steady play on the outside.	D.A. Autry, Sr.
CB	Cornelius Richards	Sr.	Easily UAB's best cover corner.	Darius Powell, Fr.
CB	Caleb Lester	Jr.	Returning to corner after year at safety.	D'Andre Green, Jr.
SS	Lamar Johnson	Sr.	Played linebacker last season.	Shalin Waterford, Fr.
FS	Calvin Jones	Jr.	Not big but makes plays.	Cortez Webb, Jr.
P	Hunter Mullins	So.	Consistency could be an issue.	Ty Long, So.

*Returning Starter

UCF | KNIGHTS

C-USA rank: 1 Record: 5-7 C-USA record: 3-5 (T-4th, East) Stadium: Bright House Networks Stadium (45,301)

By Paul Borden

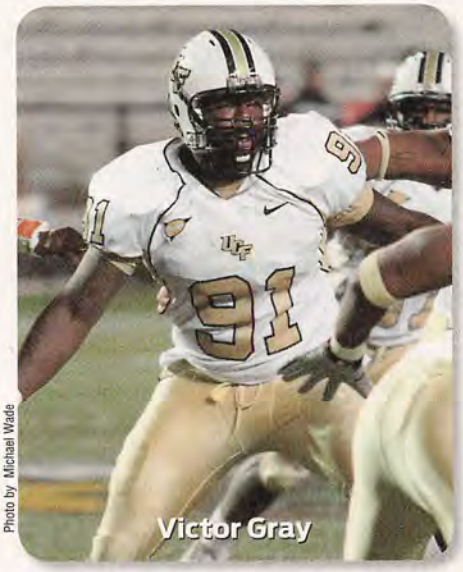


Photo by Michael Wade

Victor Gray

"That chip on our shoulders is still there. And it will be there until we win a conference championship."
— Senior linebacker Jonathan Davis

KNIGHTS at a GLANCE

COACH: George O'Leary — At UCF: 50-51, 8 years; overall: 102-84, 15 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Charlie Taaffe
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Jim Fleming

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2010
LAST BOWL: 2010, Liberty
RETURNING STARTERS: 9; 3 offense, 6 defense

PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Blake Bortles, RB Storm Johnson, RB Latavius Murray, WR Quincy McDuffie, DE Troy Davis, DE Victor Gray, LB Ray Shipman, CB A.J. Bouye

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: The Knights have talent and depth at running back. The defense looks stout all over, but especially in the secondary, where four players with significant starting experience return.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: Some issues cleared with the likely return of Jeff Godfrey and J.J. Worton, but will Bortles by looking over his shoulder? New kickers are nearly always question marks, and the Knights have two of them. The first month of the season features the first-ever meetings with Ohio State and Missouri.

OFFENSE

Blake Bortles saw an opportunity and grabbed it.

When Jeff Godfrey left UCF after just two seasons following the disappointing 5-7 mark in 2011, Bortles, who had served as Godfrey's backup at quarterback, used the spring to solidify his position as the starter for 2012.

After spring ball, it was announced that Godfrey was expected to return, likely as a receiver and change-up quarterback. Bortles, who completed 68 percent of his passes for 958 yards in 10 appearances, still goes into fall camp as the starter.

The Knights resolved another question after spring with the news that receiver J.J. Worton, who had been on indefinite suspension, will return. He had 41 receptions as a redshirt freshman in 2011.

Senior Quincy McDuffie (43 catches) and sophomore Josh Reese (30) are the other wide receivers who have something in the way of experience. Rannell Hall, who earned All-Conference USA honors as a kick returner as a freshman in 2011, should see an increased role as a receiver.

Running back is solid with the return of veterans Latavius Murray and Brynn Harvey, who split several starts last season, and newcomer Storm Johnson, a transfer from Miami. Johnson was a big-time recruit out of Georgia, ranked No. 22 overall by ESPN.com after the 2009 season. Johnson rushed 19 times for 199 yards as a freshman at Miami.

The line returns three key veterans, including two-year starter Jordan Rae at center.

DEFENSE

UCF returns several key players from a unit that led C-USA in rushing defense (108.8 yards per game), total defense (303.3), and scoring defense (18.3) in 2011.

One of them is Victor Gray, who played his first two years at tackle but was moved outside to end in the spring. With Troy Davis at the other end, the Knights are set to give opposing quarterbacks major headaches this fall.

Seniors Jonathan Davis and Ray Shipman, a former Florida basketball player, are solid at linebacker, and the Knights return three key players in the secondary in cornerback Brandon Alexander and safeties Kemal Ishmael and Clayton Geathers.

Josh Robinson elected to pass up his final collegiate season to enter the NFL Draft, but A.J. Bouye, a starter before a knee injury cut his season in half, is back at corner.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Sophomore Shawn Moffitt, who hit 5 of 9 field-goal attempts as the backup in 2011, and sophomore Sean Galvin will continue the competition for the primary kicking job.

Jamie Boyle, who has seen brief action in handling some kicking chores over the last three years, is the leading candidate to handle punts in place of the departed David Bohner.

OVERVIEW

If the Knights can find answers at wide receiver, they look to be in position for a big bounce-back season in 2011. The running game should be especially strong, and the defense has the ability to keep them in just about every game.

TOP NEWCOMER

WR Breshad Perriman: Perriman, the son of former Miami Hurricane and NFL star Brett Perriman, had a sensational spring after enrolling early. He looks to be a starter as a true freshman when UCF opens with a three-wide receiver set.

2012 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE					
QB	5	Blake Bortles	6-4	221	So.
TB	28	Latavius Murray	6-3	222	Sr.
FB	32	Billy Giovanetti	5-11	230	Sr.
WR	**14**	**Quincy McDuffie***	**5-10**	**178**	**Sr.**
WR	80	Josh Reese	6-1	176	So.
TE	84	Justin Tukes	6-5	246	So.
LT	72	Torrian Wilson	6-4	306	So.
LG	**68**	**Theo Goins***	**6-4**	**317**	**Sr.**
C	**73**	**Jordan Rae***	**6-2**	**275**	**Sr.**
RG	63	Jordan McCray	6-4	310	Jr.
RT	64	Justin McCray	6-4	309	Jr.
DEFENSE					
LE	**58**	**Troy Davis***	**6-2**	**249**	**Sr.**
LT	69	Thomas Niles	6-2	266	Fr.
DT	93	Josh Wofford	6-1	298	Jr.
DE	**91**	**Victor Gray***	**6-4**	**267**	**Jr.**
LB	**11**	**Jonathan Davis***	**5-9**	**202**	**Sr.**
LB	41	Terrance Plummer	6-1	228	So.
LB	46	Ray Shipman	6-5	242	Sr.
CB	37	Brandon Alexander	6-1	183	So.
CB	**21**	**A.J. Bouye***	**6-0**	**186**	**Sr.**
SS	**26**	**Clayton Geathers***	**6-3**	**204**	**So.**
FS	**18**	**Kemal Ishmael***	**5-11**	**206**	**Sr.**
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	83	Shawn Moffitt	6-0	176	So.
P	43	Jamie Boyle	5-10	194	Sr.

* Returning Starters in Bold

2012 SCHEDULE

Aug. 30	at Akron
Sept. 8	at Ohio State
Sept. 15	FIU
Sept. 29	MISSOURI
Oct. 4	EAST CAROLINA
Oct. 13	SOUTHERN MISS
Oct. 20	at Memphis
Oct. 27	at Marshall
Nov. 3	SMU
Nov. 10	at UTEP
Nov. 17	at Tulsa
Nov. 24	UAB

2011 RESULTS

W	CHARLESTON SOUTHERN	62-0
W	BOSTON COLLEGE	30-3
L	at FIU	10-17
L	at BYU	17-24
W	MARSHALL	16-6
L	at SMU	17-38
L	at UAB	24-26
W	MEMPHIS	41-0
L	TULSA	17-24
L	at Southern Miss	29-30
L	at East Carolina	31-38
W	UTEP	31-14

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	27.1	59
Rushing	168.8	43
Passing	238.0	55
Total	406.8	40
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	18.3	9
Rushing	108.8	16
Pass	194.5	23
Total	303.3	9
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
- 3	- 0.25	82

LOUISVILLE CARDINALS

OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Shawn Watson **DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Vance Bedford** **STADIUM: Papa John's Cardinal Stadium: 55,000**

AT A GLANCE

2011:
7-6, 5-2 Big East (T-1st)

COACH:
Charlie Strong — At Louisville and overall: 14-12, 2 years

RETURNING STARTERS:
12; 6 offense, 6 defense

PLAYERS TO WATCH:
QB Teddy Bridgewater, RB Dominique Brown, WR DeVante Parker, DE Marcus Smith, LB Preston Brown, CB Adrian Bushell, S Hakeem Smith, S Calvin Pryor

PRIMARY STRENGTHS:
The youth movement returns for Act II after turning what was supposed to be a rebuilding year into a share of the Big East title. Bridgewater is only getting better after starting 10 games as a true freshman. The defense finally has the personnel to be molded in the fashion that suits Strong.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS:
The offensive line needs some depth and has to prove that it can protect Bridgewater, but it should be better after playing three freshmen last season. The Cards' biggest issue might simply be dealing with the weight of high expectations. They are the preseason pick to win the Big East.

KEY LOSSES:
RB Victor Anderson, WR Josh Bellamy, TE Josh Chichester, OT Ryan Kessling, LB Dexter Heyman, DE Greg Scruggs

OVERVIEW:
The schedule isn't particularly intimidating, with a non-conference slate that includes home games against Kentucky and North Carolina, and a trip to Southern Miss, which lost coach Larry Fedora in the offseason to the Tar Heels. West Virginia's move to the Big 12 and Temple's addition to the Big East leaves the Cards as the clear frontrunner in the league. It should make for a special season.

Experienced Cardinals No Longer the Surprise of Big East

Louisville's third season under head coach Charlie Strong is shaping up to be its most charming.

The Cardinals surprised many by transforming a 2-4 start into a 7-6 record, a share of the Big East title and a spot in the Belk Bowl. There will be no more surprises coming out of the Derby City this season. Louisville is positioned as a frontrunner and has the horses to lead wire to wire.

Sophomore quarterback Teddy Bridgewater learned on the job as a true freshman and is more seasoned. Sophomore DeVante Parker, who caught six touchdown passes out of 18 overall receptions, is ready to become an every-down receiver.

After playing 11 true freshmen last season — and each started at least one game — the Cards won't have to rely on any this year. They only have nine seniors, so the majority of starters on offense and defense are still young — but experienced — players.

"A lot is going to be said about this team, a lot is going to be written about this team," Strong said. "Are we going to be mature enough to handle it?"

OFFENSE

No player benefitted more from being thrown in as a true freshman than quarterback Teddy Bridgewater.

He was able to handle so much more in the spring in terms of line audibles and throwing progressions. It's going to open up the offense, making it that much more unpredictable.

The offensive line returns four starters, but Bridgewater (6-3, 213) also added about 20 pounds and will be able to absorb more hits.

"He's been lights out (in the spring)," offensive coordinator Shawn Watson said. "... As a young player, he didn't quite 'get it.' Now he does, and you're seeing a lot more completions."

Bridgewater will have plenty of help, starting in the backfield where a pair of nomads finally found a home at running back.

Dominique Brown was at quarterback until the third game of last season, when he had a breakout performance at running back at Kentucky. Senorise Perry was also used at cornerback, but converted to running back. Brown (6-2, 226) is a more imposing runner. Perry is arguably the fastest player on the team.

Jeremy Wright and Corvin Lamb are also in the rotation, making the position one of Louisville's deepest.

DeVante Parker has many nicknames, including the "Ball Fetcher" for his knack of seemingly appearing out of thin air to make receptions. Like Bridgewater, Parker now understands the big picture of the offense.

"As a freshman, you're still learning so many things," Watson said. "You're in China for a good part of the season trying to figure out this new language. ... DeVante is textbook in his route running. There are no errors in his game."

Competition at receiver is pushing Parker. The talented, but oft injured, Damian Copeland is finally healthy. Michaelee Harris, who is recovering from a knee injury, is expected to be ready by fall camp. Harris started every regular season game last year.

Former walk-on Scott Radcliff is pushing Eli Rogers at the slot position. Senior Andrell Smith is the most physical of them all and can make tough catches in traffic.

DEFENSE

Strong, who was a longtime defensive coordinator, finally has the personnel with the experience to develop a domi-

nating unit. It's hard to say what unit is the strongest.

The secondary returns all four starters, including strong safety Hakeem Smith, who has started 24 consecutive games. Smith is tied with linebacker Preston Brown as the returning leading tackler (84).

Free safety Calvin Pryor took over in the middle of last season as a true freshman and became a better player than the junior he replaced. Pryor had two interceptions, which is the most among returnees.

Cornerbacks Adrian Bushell and Andrew Johnson will allow coordinator Vance Bedford to play more man coverage so he can bring pressure. Cornerback Terell Floyd is essentially a third starter who will be used early on in nickel packages.

Brown moves to the middle to replace Dexter Heyman, who led the team in tackles last season.

"If you're going to be an outstanding player and if you're going to be the leader of this defense, you're middle linebacker has got to be the guy," Strong said. "Preston can be that guy."

He'll have help from Deiontrez Mount, who at 6-5, 243 plays a hybrid role. Mount can stand as a linebacker and drop into coverage or line up as a defensive end and rush the passer.

Louisville has several players who fit that mold, including B.J. Butler and Lorenzo Mauldin. Butler was injured throughout last season and Strong is expecting Mauldin to have a breakout year.

"He's so athletic. He's fast and physical and he can get off blocks," Strong said.

Anchoring the Cards in the middle of the line will be a rotation of Brandon Dunn, Jamaine Brooks and Roy Philon.

"This can be a special group. It's all about work," Strong said.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Louisville, which has to replace kicker Chris Philpott and punter Josh Bleser, believes it has found capable candidates.

John Wallace, a redshirt freshman, earned a scholarship out of high school. He made good on a 52-yarder during the spring game. Ryan Johnson will take over punting duties.

Adrian Bushell established himself last season as a budding special teams superstar. He had a 100-yard kickoff return for a touchdown, as well as two blocked kicks — one was returned for a score, which helped propel the Cards to a win at West Virginia.

The Cards had four players last season with kickoff returns of 45 or more yards, but finished seventh in the Big East in punt returns with a 4.9-yard average.

— C.L. Brown

Teddy Bridgewater
Photo by Jamie Rhodes-US PRESSWIRE

SCOUTING REPORT: Offense

2011 stats: 169.3 ypg rushing (3rd in ACC/42nd in NCAA), 210.3 passing (10th/75th); 379.7 total offense (6th/67th), 23.1 ppg (10th/87th)

POS	STARTER	YR.	COMMENT	BACKUP/KEY DEPTH
QB	Teddy Bridgewater*	So.	Will use many more weapons in Year Two.	Will Stein, Sr.
RB	Dominique Brown	Jr.	Converted quarterback is team's leading returning rusher.	Senorise Perry, Jr.
WR	DeVante Parker	So.	All he does is catch touchdown passes.	Michaelee Harris, So.*
WR	Eli Rogers	So.	He's a crafty receiver in slot position.	Scott Radcliff, Sr.
WR	Andrell Smith	Sr.	A physical receiver defensive backs want no part of tackling.	Damian Copeland, Jr.
TE	Nate Nord	Sr.	Primed for a breakout year if he can stay healthy.	Chris White, Jr.
LT	Alex Kupper*	Sr.	Injured in spring game, but should be a go for fall camp.	Ryan Mack, Fr.
LG	John Miller*	So.	Started 10 games as a true freshman last season.	Kamran Joyer, Jr.
C	Mario Benavides*	Sr.	Mr. Reliable begins fourth season as a starter.	Mike Romano, Fr.
RG	Jake Smith*	So.	Potential to be anchor of the line; started every game in 2011.	Josh Stearns, Fr.
RT	Jamon Brown	So.	Successfully transitioned from defensive line last season.	Chris Acosta, So.
K	John Wallace	Fr.	Scholarship kicker with big leg.	Andrew Fletcher, So.

*Returning Starter

SCOUTING REPORT: Defense

2011 stats: 219.8 ypg rushing (12th in ACC/111th in NCAA), 237.4 passing (9th/75th); 457.2 total defense (12th/108th), 34.3 ppg (12th/102nd)

POS	STARTER	YR.	COMMENT	BACKUP/KEY DEPTH
DE	B.J. Dubose	So.	Has the size and strength that Charlie Strong covets in DE.	B.J. Butler, Jr.
DT	Jamaine Brooks	So.	At 330 pounds, he's your run stuffer at the 3-technique.	Dominique Dishman, Fr.
DT	Brandon Dunn*	Jr.	Developing into the bully of defensive line.	Roy Philon, Jr.
DE	Marcus Smith	Jr.	Pass rushing specialist; led team with 5.5 sacks last season.	Lorenzo Mauldin, So.
LB	Deiontrez Mount	So.	Arguably most versatile defender; will also lineup at DE.	George Durant, Jr.
LB	Preston Brown*	Jr.	Moves from SAM LB to replace Dexter Heyman in middle.	Mike Privott, Jr.
LB	Daniel Brown	Sr.	Doesn't always make the big plays, but always around the ball.	Deon Rogers, Jr.
CB	Andrew Johnson*	So.	Settling in after starting most of last season.	Jordon Paschal, So.
CB	Adrian Bushell*	Sr.	Big-time game changer; blocked two kicks last year.	Terell Floyd, So.
SS	Hakeem Smith*	Jr.	Veteran of secondary, led team with 10 passes defended.	Jermaine Reve, Fr.
FS	Calvin Pryor*	So.	Had two interceptions, but known for dropping big hits.	Kamal Hogan, So.
P	Ryan Johnson	So.	Steps into full-time role for the first time.	John Wallace, Fr.

*Returning Starter

CARDINALS RECRUITING 2012

rivals.com

Name	Pos	Ht	Wt	Stars	Hometown	School
Sid Anvoots Played offensive tackle... Ranked No. 20 center nationally and No. 19 player in Indiana by Rivals.com... Helped team to two consecutive state championships…	OL	6-4	285	✪✪✪	Indianapolis, IN	Bishop Chatard
Joshua Appleby Rivals.com rated No. 13 kicker nationally... Selected to the play in Offense-Defense All-America Game... Originally played soccer… Put 71 percent of kickoffs into the end zone as a junior... Made six of nine field goals with a long of 44 yards... Averaged 35 yards per punt, including a long of 52 yards... Also played tight end.	K	6-3	230	✪✪	Harvest, AL	East Limestone
Lamar Atkins Helped team to 15-0 record and state championship as a senior... Had more than 60 tackles as a senior.	LB	6-0	205	✪✪	Miami, FL	Miami Norland
Hunter Bowles All-State... District Player of the Year... Team captain... Played tight end and defensive end... As a senior, helped team to 14-1 record and state championship game... Had 46 solo tackles and eight quarterback sacks... Had 20 receptions for 346 yards and three touchdowns... Had 70 career receptions for 1,018 yards and 13 touchdowns... Member of basketball and baseball teams.	TE	6-6	245	✪✪✪	Glasgow, KY	Glasgow
DeAngelo Brown All-State Defensive Player of the Year... Three-time All-Region and All-Conference... City Defensive Player of the Year... Team captain… Had 85 tackles, including 26 tackles for loss, 12 quarterback sacks and three forced fumbles as a senior... Helped team to 15-0 record and state championship after finishing as state runners-up in junior and sophomore seasons.	DT	6-1	285	✪✪✪	Savannah, GA	Savannah Christian School
Keith Brown Enrolled in January... Ranked No. 7 inside linebacker nationally and No. 25 player in Florida by Rivals.com... Selected as U.S. Army All-American... *Times-Union* Super 75... All-State... As a senior, helped team to 15-0 record and state championship... Had 113 tackles, five quarterback sacks and returned one interception for touchdown.	LB	6-1	225	✪✪✪✪	Miami, FL	Miami Norland
James Burgess Jr. Enrolled in January... Ranked No. 62 outside linebacker nationally by Rivals.com… Played in only two games in 2011 after breaking hand... Had 30 tackles and one interception returned for touchdown in those two games... Team captain… Selected to Semper Fidelis All-American Bowl.	LB	6-0	200	✪✪✪	Homestead, FL	Homestead
Gerald Christian Enrolled in January... Transfer from University of Florida... Played in eight games at Florida… Rivals.com rated No. 2 prep tight end nationally... Participated in 2010 U.S. Army All-American Bowl... Helped team to 14-1 record and state championship in 2009...	TE	6-3	240	✪✪✪✪	Palm City Gardens, FL	William T. Dwyer
Robert Clark Enrolled in January... Transferred from Florida... Had seven receptions for 69 yards... As a prep senior, had 30 receptions for 664 yards and nine touchdowns… Helped team to 14-1 record and state championship... All-Area as a junior… Had 50 tackles and four interceptions.	WR	5-8	185	✪✪✪	Palm City Gardens, FL	William T. Dwyer
Nick Dawson Ranked No. 2 inside linebacker and No. 89 player nationally by Rivals.com... Selected to play in Army All-American game... All-State... Had 126 tackles, 12 quarterback sacks, eight forced fumbles and six fumbles recovered as a senior...	LB	6-3	228	✪✪✪✪	Charlotte, NC	Phillip O Berry Acad Of Tech
Abraham Garcia Rivals.com rated No. 55 offensive guard nationally… All-State… *Sun-Sentinel* All-County… Allowed only one quarterback sack as a starter at offensive tackle... Team captain during playoffs... Can play both tackle and guard.	OL	6-6	339	✪✪✪	Fort Lauderdale, FL	University School
Will Gardner Ranked No. 29 pro-style quarterback nationally by Rivals.com... Ruptured ACL and missed senior season… *Atlanta-Journal Constitution* rated among top quarterbacks in Georgia... Three-year starter… Led team to state playoffs as a junior, when he had almost 1,400 yards passing and 14 touchdowns.	QB	6-5	190	✪✪✪	Douglas, GA	Coffee County
DeAndre Herron Ranked No. 48 offensive guard nationally and No. 14 player in Indiana by Rivals.com… All-State... All-Conference… Team Most Valuable Player... Switched to offensive line after starting high school career on the defensive line… Had 32 pancake blocks and graded at 82 percent on blocking as a senior... Selected to the Indiana Top 25 team.	OL	6-5	325	✪✪✪	Avon, IN	Avon
Gerod Holliman Rivals.com rated No. 2 prep school player nationally.... Selected to U.S. Army All-American Bowl... Had 12 interceptions as a senior, returning five for touchdowns... Had an 80-yard kickoff return for a touchdown and a 38-yard interception return for a touchdown… Had six receptions for 78 yards and 118 yards rushing.	DB	6-0	185	✪✪✪✪	New Berlin, NY	Milford Academy
Kevin Houchins Missed most of senior season after tearing ACL... Two-year defensive starter... Played free safety and wide receiver... As a senior, had 22 tackles and five passes broken up... Returned a kickoff 95 yards for a touchdown... Had 50 tackles, including three tackles for loss, two interceptions and one defensive touchdown as a junior… Rated No 16 player in Northeast Ohio by *The Cleveland Plain Dealer.*	DB	5-11	175	✪✪✪	South Euclid, OH	Brush
Ryan Hubbell Enrolled in January... Second-team All-Midwest Conference... Had 16 receptions for 250 yards and three touchdowns... Team captain as a sophomore... Helped team to No. 7 ranking nationally... As a freshman, had 12 receptions for 200 yards and two touchdowns in six games… Academic All-Region... Prepped at Marion (Iowa) High School.	TE	6-5	235	✪✪	Council Bluffs, IA	Iowa Western C.C.
Larry Jefferson All-State... Ranked No. 36 weakside defensive end nationally and No. 41 player in Georgia by Rivals.com… *Atlanta-Journal Constitution* All-State… As a senior, had more than 400 yards receiving… Had 13 quarterback sacks.	DE	6-5	218	✪✪✪	College Park, GA	Banneker
T.C. Klusman Rivals.com rated No. 66 offensive tackle nationally and No. 46 player in Ohio… All-Conference... Team captain.	OL	6-4	270	✪✪✪	Cincinnati, OH	Elder High School
Joe Manley Ranked No. 7 player in Kentucky by Rivals.com… Started playing football in third grade… Participated in Army All-American combine… All-State... Helped team to state championship in 2011.	OL	6-7	307	✪✪✪	Bowling Green, KY	Bowling Green
Devontre Pamell Ranked No. 30 cornerback nationally and No.13 player in South Carolina by Rivals.com… Returned punts and kickoffs.	DB	5-11	163	✪✪✪	Winnsboro, SC	Fairfield Central
Brandon Radcliff *Miami Herald* third-team All-State… Helped team to regional and district championships in 2011… As a junior, had 473 yards rushing and nine touchdowns on 49 carries… Battled injuries in 2010.	RB	5-10	215	✪✪✪	Miami, FL	Columbus
Sheldon Rankins Rivals.com rated No. 32 strongside defensive end nationally and No. 43 player in Georgia… Two-time second-team All-State… Two-time All-Region… Had 105 tackles, including 32 tackles for loss, and 25 quarterback sacks over last two seasons... Missed part of senior campaign with injury.	DE	6-3	260	✪✪✪	Covington, GA	Eastside
Pedro Sibiea Participated in Friday Night Lights… Speed is an asset with 4.77 seconds in 40-yard dash… Ranked among Top 100 players in Florida.	DE	6-3	251	✪✪✪	Homestead, FL	Homestead
Brandon Snell Ranked No. 96 wide receiver nationally by Rivals.com… *Miami Herald* rated No. 17 player in Dade County… Had 10 receptions for 168 yards and three touchdowns in one game in 2011… Helped team to state finals as a junior… Had 45 receptions for 640 yards and 10 touchdowns.	WR	5-11	160	✪✪✪	Miami Gardens, FL	Carol City

A LOOK AT THE CARDINALS

RESULTS

	7-6, 5-2	
W	MURRAY STATE	21-9
L	FIU	17-24
W	at Kentucky	24-17
L	MARSHALL	13-17
L	at North Carolina	7-14
L	at Cincinnati	16-25
W	RUTGERS	16-14
W	SYRACUSE	27-10
W	at West Virginia	38-35
L	PITTSBURGH	14-21
W	at Connecticut	34-20
W	at South Florida	34-24
	Belk Bowl	
L	vs. NC State	24-31

INDIVIDUAL STATS

PASSING

	Cmp	Att	Int	Pct	Yds	TD
T. Bridgewater	191	296	12	64.5	2129	14
W. Stein	52	84	1	61.9	620	5

RUSHING

	Att	Yds	Avg	TD	Long
V. Anderson	114	539	4.7	3	61
D. Brown	140	533	3.8	4	55
J. Wright	73	334	4.6	1	29

RECEIVING

	Att	Yds	Avg	TD	Long
E. Rogers	41	454	11.1	1	58
M. Harris	37	455	12.3	2	44
J. Chichester	28	393	14.0	2	31

DEF. LEADERS

Tackles: D. Heyman 90, H. Smith 84, P. Brown 84
Tackles for loss: D. Heyman 16, W. Savoy 8.5, M. Smith 6.5
Sacks: M. Smith 5.5, W. Savoy 5, D. Heyman 4.5
Interceptions: D. Heyman 3, M. Evans 2, C. Pryor 2

SCHEDULE

Date	Opponent	'11 Record
Sept. 2	KENTUCKY	5-7
Sept. 8	MISSOURI STATE	2-9
Sept. 15	NORTH CAROLINA	7-6
Sept. 22	at FIU	8-5
Sept. 29	at Southern Miss	12-2
Oct. 13	at Pittsburgh	6-7
Oct. 20	SOUTH FLORIDA	5-7
Oct. 26	CINCINNATI	10-3
Nov. 3	TEMPLE	9-4
Nov. 10	at Syracuse	5-7
Nov. 24	CONNECTICUT	5-7
Nov. 29	at Rutgers	9-4

FIU, Arkansas State Still Atop the Surging Sun Belt

Six bowl appearances involving five teams — more than half the league — in the past two years serves as solid evidence the Sun Belt is getting better.

Now the league is getting bigger.

South Alabama becomes the 10th football-playing member in 2012, and Georgia State will make it 11 when it comes aboard in 2013.

Expansion is not expected to stop there.

New commissioner Karl Benson, who officially took over his new post March 15 and engineered the addition of Georgia State in his first month on the job, sees adding a 12th football-playing member as a priority. That, of course, would allow the league to split into two divisions and join the list of conferences that cap their regular seasons with championship games.

"I think it's a great exposure opportunity," Benson said of the potential impact of a title game. "There is some risk involved as we saw in Conference USA last year — Houston goes from being in the BCS to losing their championship game. So there is some risk.

"But in my opinion, the advantages outweigh the risks in terms of exposure and creating even more regular-season interest as teams are vying for that championship game."

As for where that 12th team will come from, Benson has no geographic preference. League members currently stretch from North Texas in the West to Florida Atlantic and Florida International in the East.

"I think it's important to maintain some geographical balance," he said, "but right now I think a 12th football-playing member could come from either the East or West."

More formal bowl tie-ins also are on Benson's radar. The Sun Belt currently sends teams to the New Orleans Bowl and the GoDaddy.com Bowl in Mobile.

"As the next generation of bowls materializes, beginning with the 2014 season," Benson said, "we expect to have at least three guaranteed bowl spots and perhaps even a fourth guaranteed.

"Assuming if we get to 12 teams, to have four guaranteed spots would be a realistic number."

Of the nine teams competing for postseason spots this fall (South Alabama is serving its final transition to the FBS level and isn't eligible for the postseason), FIU, Arkansas State, Louisiana-Monroe, and Louisiana are the strongest bowl contenders.

Troy and Western Kentucky, which at 7-5 was eligible last year but didn't get picked, are on the edge. North Texas and Middle Tennessee could jump up to the middle, but Florida Atlantic and South Alabama have much work ahead.

— Paul Borden

Sun Belt Conference Picks

	Good news	Bad news	Our call
1. FIU	FIU has the best defense in the conference and one of the best running games.	WR T.Y. Hilton isn't around anymore to bail out the Panthers with big plays.	The Panthers look to win their second league title and go bowling for a third straight season.
2. Arkansas State	Quarterback Ryan Aplin is back, along with four of the top five receivers from 2011.	The pressure is on new coach Gus Malzahn to live up to his reputation.	If the Red Wolves can fill the holes on defense, they will contend for the crown again.
3. LA-Monroe	Offense is loaded with skill, headed by QB Kolton Browning, a two-year starter.	This is getting close to a "win-or-else" situation for coach Todd Berry.	The Warhawks could compete for a bowl spot if they have the answers on defense.
4. Louisiana	The offense will have punch with all-conference candidates at QB, RB and WR.	The defense might have problems stopping people unless answers are found quickly.	Getting FIU and Arkansas State at home could be the key to success for the Cajuns.
5. Troy	The Trojans have 10 starters back on offense, including QB Corey Robinson.	A porous 2011 defense didn't show much in the way of progress in the spring.	Troy should increase its win total (three in 2011) but not by enough to get back to top of the Sun Belt.
6. Western Kentucky	The Hilltoppers welcome back 15 starters on offense and defense, including their QB.	One of the losses was RB Bobby Rainey, who accounted for nearly half the offense.	The Hilltoppers will take a small step back after last year's surprising 7-5 run.
7. North Texas	A veteran line protects QB Derek Thompson, who has three of his top receivers returning.	Inexperience in the secondary makes Mean Green vulnerable to the spread attacks it will face.	With a break or two, North Texas could reach .500 level, but five wins is more realistic.
8. Middle Tenn.	QB Logan Kilgore returns to lead what was a very productive offense in 2011.	New coordinator Tyrone Nix is going to have to work wonders on the Blue Raiders defense.	The Raiders must come together defensively to have even an outside shot at breaking even.
9. Florida Atlantic	A new coach has brought a new offense, new defense and new attitude to the Owls.	Issues on both sides of the ball (especially at quarterback) still must be settled in fall camp.	The Owls have a couple of winnable games early, but they have a long, long way to go.
10. So. Alabama	Even without veteran LB Ken Barefield (dismissed), the defense looks to be competitive.	Depth problems are going to lead to struggles along the offensive line.	Jaguars have misfortune of joining the Sun Belt when the league is at its strongest.

Lindy's 2012 ALL-Sun Belt Team

OFFENSE - FIRST TEAM

QB	Ryan Aplin	Sr.	Arkansas State
RB	Kedrick Rhodes	Jr.	FIU
RB	Alonzo Harris	So.	Louisiana
WR	Brent Leonard	Sr.	Louisiana-Monroe
WR	Javone Lawson	Sr.	Louisiana
TE	Jack Doyle	Sr.	Western Kentucky
C	Josh Allen	Jr.	Louisiana-Monroe
OL	Leonardo Bates	Sr.	Louisiana
OL	Caylin Hauptmann	Sr.	FIU
OL	Adam Smith	Sr.	Western Kentucky
OL	Kyle Wilborn	Sr.	Troy
AP	Brelan Chancellor	Jr.	North Texas
K	Jack Griffin	Sr.	FIU

DEFENSE - FIRST TEAM

DL	Tourek Williams	Sr.	FIU
DL	Quanterus Smith	Sr.	Western Kentucky
DL	Isame Faciane	Jr.	FIU
DL	Omar McLendon	Sr.	Middle Tennessee
LB	Jordan Hunt	Sr.	FIU
LB	Andrew Jackson	Jr.	Western Kentucky
LB	Winston Fraser	Sr.	FIU
DB	Jemarlous Moten	Sr.	Louisiana
DB	Keith Reaser	Sr.	FAU
DB	Jajuan Harley	Jr.	Middle Tennessee
DB	Jonathan Cyprien	Sr.	FIU
P	Will Atterberry	Sr.	North Texas

OFFENSE - SECOND TEAM

QB	Blaine Gautier	Sr.	Louisiana
RB	Shawn Southward	Sr.	Troy
RB	Jyruss Edwards	Jr.	Louisiana-Monroe
WR	Josh Jarboe	Sr.	Arkansas State
WR	Eric Thomas	Jr.	Troy
WR	Taylor Stockemer	Sr.	Arkansas State
C	Trey Clark	Sr.	South Alabama
OL	Rupert Bryan	Sr.	FIU
OL	Jaron Odom	Jr.	Louisiana
OL	Jonathan Gill	Sr.	Louisiana-Monroe
OL	Cyril Lemon	So.	North Texas
AP	Darryl Surgent	Jr.	Louisiana
K	Brett Baer	Sr.	Louisiana

DEFENSE - SECOND TEAM

DL	Dexter Blackmon	Jr.	Arkansas State
DL	Jamarcus Allen	Sr.	Western Kentucky
DL	Gerrand Johnson	Fr.	Louisiana-Monroe
DL	Tony Davis	Sr.	Troy
LB	Randell Johnson	Jr.	FAU
LB	Zach Orr	Jr.	North Texas
LB	Kanorris Davis	Sr.	Troy
DB	Melvin White	Sr.	Louisiana
DB	Vincent Eddie	Jr.	Louisiana-Monroe
DB	Kareem Peterson	Sr.	Western Kentucky
DB	Brynden Trawick	Sr.	Troy
P	Brett Baer	Jr.	Louisiana

THE BIG ONES

Sept. 1	FIU at Duke
Sept. 1	Arkansas State at Oregon
Sept. 8	Louisiana at Troy
Sept. 15	Louisiana at Oklahoma State
Sept. 22	Louisville at FIU
Sept. 29	FIU at Louisiana
Sept. 29	Western Kentucky at Arkansas State
Oct. 4	Arkansas State at FIU
Oct. 6	Louisiana-Monroe at Middle Tennessee
Oct. 16	Louisiana at North Texas
Oct. 23	Arkansas State at Louisiana
Oct. 27	Western Kentucky at FIU
Nov. 3	Louisiana at Louisiana-Monroe
Nov. 10	Louisiana at Florida
Nov. 24	Louisiana-Monroe at FIU

BOWL CONNECTIONS

Sun Belt #1/2
Sun Belt Champion
New Orleans Bowl vs.
Conference USA

Sun Belt #1/2
GoDaddy.com Bowl vs. MAC

TOP 10 NFL TALENT

1. Tourek Williams	DE	Sr.	FIU	Relentless pass rusher with nice size (6-4, 255).
2. Jack Doyle	TE	Sr.	WKU	At 6-6, 251, has size combined with good hands.
3. Jonathan Cyprien	DB	Sr.	FIU	His play is drawing rave reviews from pro scouts.
4. Jordan Hunt	LB	Sr.	FIU	Covers lots of ground and delivers a hard hit.
5. Adam Smith	OL	Sr.	WKU	Rangy veteran who has made 34 career starts.
6. Caylin Hauptmann	OL	SR.	FIU	More discipline would pay big dividends.
7. Javone Lawson	WR	Sr.	Louisiana	Had a breakout year with 63 catches last year.
8. Jack Griffin	PK	Sr.	FIU	A clutch kicker with a strong, accurate leg.
9. Brynden Trawick	DB	Sr.	Troy	A tackling machine in the secondary.
10. Brent Baer	P/PK	Sr.	Louisiana	Solid performer in handling both kicking responsibilities.

Most Valuable Player	Offensive Player of the Year	Defensive Player of the Year	Newcomer of the Year
Ryan Aplin, QB, Arkansas State	Blaine Gautier, QB, Louisiana	Tourek Williams, DE, FIU	Austin Moss, LB, LA-Monroe

HONOR ROLL

Most Accurate Passer	Blaine Gautier	Louisiana
Strongest Arm	Blaine Gautier	Louisiana
Best Scrambler	Ryan Aplin	Arkansas State
Coolest in Clutch	Ryan Aplin	Arkansas State
Toughest to Bring Down	Kedrick Rhodes	FIU
Best Hands	Brent Leonard	Louisiana-Monroe
Most Dangerous Deep Threat	Javone Lawson	Louisiana
Best Pass Blocker	Adam Smith	Western Kentucky
Best Run Blocker	Cyril Lemon	North Texas
Best Pass Rusher	Quanterus Smith	Western Kentucky
Best Cover Corner	Keith Reaser	Florida Atlantic
Special Teams Demon	Brelan Chancellor	North Texas

ARKANSAS STATE | RED WOLVES

Sun Belt rank: 2 Record: 10-3 Sun Belt record: 8-0 (1st) Stadium: ASU Stadium (30,708)

By Paul Borden

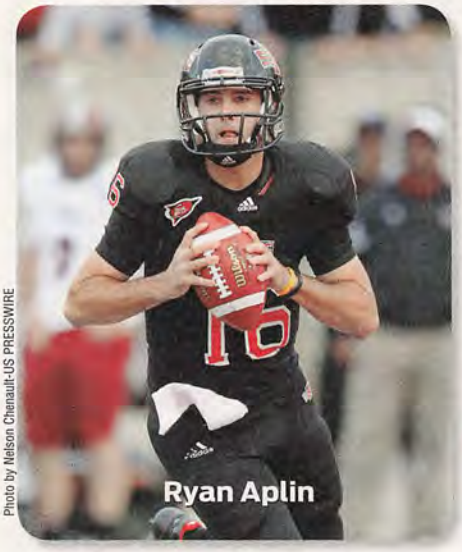


Photo by Nelson Chenault-US PRESSWIRE

"He is the real deal."
— An opposing coach, on ASU quarterback Ryan Aplin

RED WOLVES at a GLANCE

COACH: Gus Malzahn — At Arkansas State and overall: 1st year
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Rhett Lashlee
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: John Thompson

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2011
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 2010
RETURNING STARTERS: 12; 6 offense, 4 defense, kicker, punter

PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Ryan Aplin, WR Josh Jarboe, WR Taylor Stockemer, DT Ryan Carrethers, LB Nathan Herrold

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: With Aplin, the Red Wolves have the top offensive threat in the conference, one who can run as well as throw. He also has some nice receiving targets. The kicking game is in good hands.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: The offensive line is looking for three new starters, and there are numerous holes that need to be filled all over the defense. Several newcomers, including junior college transfers and freshmen, are going to have to step in right away.

OFFENSE

Quarterback Ryan Aplin, who led the Sun Belt's top offense last year, is back for his senior season.

Aplin will be missing his favorite receiver with the departure of Dwayne Frampton, who had a school single-season record 94 receptions in 2011. But Josh Jarboe, the Red Wolves' No. 2 pass catcher with 54 receptions, and Taylor Stockemer return, along with Allen Muse, who is looking to move onto the school's top 10 list in receiving in his third season.

Running back Derek Lawson (486 yards rushing) has departed, leaving a hole in the backfield, but the bigger issue on offense will be finding three new starters on the line, two on the left side, to protect Aplin. The Wolves added junior college offensive lineman DeShawn Byrd (6-6, 315) in the spring to help out.

There was a bit of mystery to the running game at the end of spring ball. Auburn transfer Michael Dyer played in the spring game, but had yet to be cleared to play this fall.

Dyer rushed for 2,335 yards in two seasons for the Tigers before running into legal issues. Dyer could apply for a hardship waiver because of the health of a family member.

Aplin was the team's leading rusher with 588 yards. Running back options are sophomore Frankie Jackson (355 yards) and junior Sirgregory Thornton.

DEFENSE

John Thompson, named coordinator at the end of February when Keith Patterson bolted for West Virginia six weeks after being hired, has only four returning starters.

They are junior tackle Ryan Carrethers, who started the last six games of 2011; senior linebacker Nathan Herrold, who was third on the team in tackles (66), and defensive backs Don Jones and Sterling Young. They combined for 120 tackles and two interceptions.

There are some players returning with experience, however, including sophomore linebacker Qushaun Lee (4.5 tackles for loss, two interceptions); senior corner Chaz Scales (three tackles for loss, one interception), and senior defensive end Tim Starson (one sack).

But Thompson likely will have to look at numerous newcomers for immediate help. They would include junior college transfer defensive tackle Dexter Blackmon and Chris Humes, a highly regarded defensive back prospect.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Arkansas State got a break when punter Neely Sullivent was granted a sixth year of eligibility. He shared the job with Ryan Wilbourn last year and averaged 39.3 yards on 22 attempts, with nine downed inside the opponent's 20-yard line.

Kicker Brian Davis was 18 of 23 on field-goal attempts, but did miss three PATs in 47 attempts.

OVERVIEW

The Red Wolves are going to need to duplicate their 2011 offensive performance while the defense rebuilds if they are to capture a second consecutive conference title. With Ryan Aplin at quarterback, they have a shot, especially if they can win an early conference test at FIU on Oct. 4.

TOP NEWCOMER

DT Dexter Blackmon: Blackmon is a highly regarded junior college transfer who looks to fill a vital spot on defense at tackle. One of the top junior college line prospects in the country, he could contend for All-Sun Belt honors in his first year.

2012 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE					
QB	**16**	**Ryan Aplin***	**6-1**	**205**	**Sr.**
RB	6	Frankie Jackson	5-9	185	So.
WR	**3**	**Josh Jarboe***	**6-3**	**215**	**Sr.**
WR	**2**	**Taylor Stockemer***	**6-4**	**210**	**Sr.**
WR	17	Allen Muse	6-4	215	Sr.
TE	**85**	**Kedric Murry***	**6-3**	**265**	**Sr.**
LT	75	Chris Tolbert	6-5	275	Jr.
LG	69	Alan Wright	6-4	295	So.
C	55	Eric Allen	6-1	300	Sr.
RG	**63**	**Cliff Mitchell***	**6-5**	**305**	**Jr.**
RT	**74**	**Zack McKnight***	**6-4**	**300**	**Sr.**
DEFENSE					
DE	54	Shervarius Jackson	6-2	230	Sr.
DT	N/A	Dexter Blackmon	6-4	283	Jr.
DT	**65**	**Ryan Carrethers***	**6-2**	**310**	**Jr.**
DE	91	Tim Starson	6-5	255	Sr.
LB	48	Qushaun Lee	5-11	225	So.
LB	**40**	**Nathan Herrold***	**6-3**	**235**	**Sr.**
DB	**5**	**Don Jones***	**6-1**	**208**	**Sr.**
CB	25	Chaz Scales	5-9	170	Sr.
CB	N/A	Chris Humes	5-11	190	Fr.
FS	**38**	**Sterling Young***	**6-2**	**182**	**So.**
SS	8	Tausean Holmes	5-10	190	Sr.
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	**2**	**Brian Davis***	**5-11**	**160**	**Jr.**
P	**15**	**Neely Sullivent***	**6-0**	**190**	**Sr.**

* Returning Starters in Bold

2012 SCHEDULE

Sept. 1	at Oregon
Sept. 8	MEMPHIS
Sept. 15	at Nebraska
Sept. 22	ALCORN STATE
Sept. 29	WESTERN KENTUCKY
Oct. 4	at FIU
Oct. 13	SOUTH ALABAMA
Oct. 23	at Louisiana
Nov. 3	at North Texas
Nov. 8	ULM
Nov. 17	at Troy
Dec 1	MIDDLE TENNESSEE

2011 RESULTS

L	at Illinois	15-33
W	MEMPHIS	47-3
L	at Virginia Tech	7-26
W	CENTRAL ARKANSAS	53-24
W	at Western Kentucky	26-22
W	at ULM	24-19
W	FIU	34-16
W	NORTH TEXAS	37-14
W	at FAU	39-21
W	LOUISIANA	30-21
W	at Middle Tennesse	45-19
W	TROY	45-14
	GoDaddy.com Bowl	
L	vs. Northern Illinois	20-38

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	32.5	31
Rushing	154.2	64
Passing	293.6	16
Total	447.9	24
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	20.8	25
Rushing	103.5	13
Pass	227.9	69
Total	331.5	24
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 2	+ 0.15	44

FLORIDA ATLANTIC | OWLS

Sun Belt rank: 9 Record: 1-11 Sun Belt record: 0-8 (9th) Stadium: FAU Stadium (30,000)

By Paul Borden

Randell Johnson

Photo by Steve Mitchell-US PRESSWIRE

"I want this team to develop a physical attitude."
— Coach Carl Pelini

OWLS at a GLANCE

COACH: Carl Pelini — At FAU and overall, 1st year
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Brian Wright
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Pete Rekstis

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2007
LAST BOWL: 2008, Motor City
RETURNING STARTERS: 15; 7 offense, 7 defense, kicker

PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Melvin German, RB Jonathan Wallace, WR DeAndre Richardson, TE Nexon Dorvilus, LB Randell Johnson, LB David Hinds, CB Keith Reaser

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: The up-tempo offense the Owls are going to use could create some mismatches if opposing defenses get caught with the wrong personnel on the field. At the very least, the spread gives the offense more of a chance for success than last year's pro set.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: The new schemes on both sides of the ball figure to take some getting used to and conditioning will have to improve on offense. Quarterback is unsettled going into the fall and depth at wide receiver is a concern in the new spread attack.

OFFENSE

FAU is abandoning the pro-set scheme it played under coach Howard Schnellenberger and going with an up-tempo, no-huddle spread attack under first-year coach Carl Pelini.

The change should give new life to an offense that ranked last nationally, producing 248.8 yards a game.

The Owls have seven starters returning on offense, including senior quarterback Graham Wilbert, but he faced a challenge in the spring from sophomore Stephen Curtis. The competition will increase in the fall when junior college transfer Melvin German reports. German and Curtis have the advantage of previously running the spread.

With the Owls going to a one-back set, former fullback Xavier Stinson was penciled in at the beginning of the spring to replace Alfred Morris, FAU's all-time leading rusher. But the senior goes into the fall No. 2 behind junior college transfer Jonathan Wallace, who had a big spring.

Wide receiver is a concern. Junior DeAndre Richardson, the leading receiver with just 32 catches in 2011, and sophomore Marcus Cunningham (18 receptions) are the top returnees. Nexon Dorvilus (20 catches) is back at tight end.

The Owls have three returning starters on the line, including veteran Andy Czuprynski. Junior Jordan Sessa, who has fought injuries in the past, came out of the spring ahead of returning starter Jimmie Colley at center.

DEFENSE

The Owls are changing schemes, junking the 3-4 defense to go primarily with a four-man front and a five-man secondary.

FAU has a solid linebacking duo in David Hinds and Randell Johnson, who were 1-2 in tackles with 110 and 92, respectively, in 2011.

Three starters, including cornerbacks Keith Reaser and Treon Howard — who combined for four of FAU's 10 interceptions — are back in the secondary.

Additional help should be coming in the fall with the arrival of several junior college transfers, including tackle Brandin Bryant, linebacker Adarius Glanton and cornerback Tony Grimes.

Grimes began his collegiate career at Ole Miss and played at Arizona Western Community College last year, where he had four interceptions.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Sophomore kicker Marcelo Bonani, the brother of South Florida kicker Maikon Bonani, goes into fall camp ahead of senior Vinny Zaccario, who was 7 of 11 on field-goal attempts in his first year on the job in 2011.

Junior Sean Dooley is looking to take over the punting duties, capably handled the past three years by Mickey Groody. Stephen Curtis, when not battling for the quarterback spot, is also making a push to be the punter.

OVERVIEW

The Owls play Georgia and Alabama in the first month, but the schedule is more favorable than last year, when they played their first five on the road. The season shouldn't be the disaster it was a year ago when they didn't win their first game until their 11th outing, but it's hard to see any more than three or four wins at best.

TOP NEWCOMER

QB Melvin German: The junior college transfer (Pearl River, Miss.) is expected to compete for the starting job in the fall. He has experience running a spread attack and completed 65 percent of his passes last season for 3,121 yards and 21 touchdowns, while rushing for 180 yards and six scores.

2012 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE					
QB	**14**	**Graham Wilbert***	**6-6**	**225**	**Sr.**
RB	30	Jonathan Wallace	6-0	198	Jr.
WR	**2**	**DeAndre Richardson***	**6-2**	**180**	**Sr.**
WR	**83**	**Marcus Cunningham***	**6-0**	**175**	**So.**
WR	89	Derek Moise	6-2	180	So.
TE	**9**	**Nexon Dorvilus***	**6-4**	**225**	**Jr.**
LT	63	DeAndre Williams	6-5	290	So.
LG	**56**	**Andy Czuprynski***	**6-5**	**270**	**Sr.**
C	79	Jordan Sessa	6-5	280	Jr.
RG	72	Stern Vile	6-5	335	Jr.
RT	**55**	**Joe Bailey***	**6-5**	**290**	**Jr.**
DEFENSE					
DE	**31**	**Cory Henry***	**6-3**	**238**	**Jr.**
LT	**96**	**Jimmy Jean***	**6-2**	**290**	**Sr.**
RT	59	Robinson Eugene	6-5	230	Fr.
DE	72	David Baptiste	5-11	250	Jr.
LB	**11**	**David Hinds***	**6-2**	**234**	**Sr.**
LB	**15**	**Randell Johnson***	**6-4**	**230**	**Jr.**
CB	**3**	**Keith Reaser***	**6-2**	**180**	**Sr.**
CB	**13**	**Treon Howard***	**5-11**	**175**	**Jr.**
NB	24	Brentley Harstad	6-1	187	Jr.
SS	26	Jeremy McKnight	5-10	180	Jr.
FS	**6**	**Demetrius Williamson***	**6-0**	**195**	**Sr.**
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	92	Marcelo Bonani	5-11	160	So.
P	67	Sean Dooley	5-11	195	Jr.

* Returning Starters in Bold

2012 SCHEDULE

Aug. 31	WAGNER
Sept. 8	at Middle Tennessee
Sept. 15	at Georgia
Sept. 22	at Alabama
Sept. 29	NORTH TEXAS
Oct. 13	at ULM
Oct. 20	at South Alabama
Oct. 27	TROY
Nov. 3	at Navy
Nov. 10	at Western Kentucky
Nov. 16	FIU
Dec. 1	LOUISIANA

2011 RESULTS

L	at Florida	3-41
L	at Michigan State	0-44
L	at Auburn	14-30
L	at Louisiana	34-37
L	at North Texas	17-31
L	WESTERN KENTUCKY	0-20
L	MIDDLE TENNESSE	14-38
L	ARKANSAS STATE	21-39
L	at FIU	7-41
L	at Troy	7-34
W	UAB	38-35
L	ULM	0-26

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	12.9	119
Rushing	105.7	108
Passing	143.1	111
Total	248.8	120
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	34.7	103
Rushing	168.9	77
Pass	223.3	59
Total	392.3	69
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
- 9	- 0.75	108

FLORIDA INT'L | GOLDEN PANTHERS

Sun Belt rank: 1 | Record: 8-5 | Sun Belt record: 5-3 (4th) | Stadium: FIU Stadium (18,000)

By Paul Borden

Photo by Robert Mayer-US PRESSWIRE

Kedrick Rhodes

"We're more flexible. We're more explosive. We're faster. We can change direction faster."
— Coach Mario Cristobal

GOLDEN PANTHERS at a GLANCE

COACH: Mario Cristobal — At FIU and overall: 24-38, 5 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Tim Cramsey
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Todd Orlando

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2010
LAST BOWL: Beef O'Brady's Bowl, 2011
RETURNING STARTERS: 19; 7 offense, 10 defense, kicker, punter

PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Jake Medlock, RB Kedrick Rhodes, WR Wayne Times, DE Tourek Williams, DT Isame Faciane, LB Jordan Hunt, LB Winston Fraser, SS Jonathan Cyprien

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: The defense has a chance to be dominating if it has corrected the propensity it had in 2011 to give up big plays late. The new up-tempo offense will put pressure on opposing defenses.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: Medlock had a bit of an up-and-down spring and must stay healthy. With as little experience as he has (five games, two starts), those behind him are even greener.

OFFENSE

FIU will be without do-everything T.Y. Hilton, who not only was the team's leading receiver over the past four years, but a threat in the running game. What's more, the Panthers will be replacing Wesley Carroll, a two-year starter at quarterback.

But the potential is there for the Panthers to increase the 25 points and 360 yards a game they averaged while going 8-5 in 2011.

Senior wide receiver Wayne Times, who had 54 catches (second to Hilton's team-leading 72) as a junior, brings big-play potential to the passing game, and running back is in good hands with Kedrick Rhodes, who rushed for 1,149 yards as a sophomore.

The line is probably the most cohesive — and talented — group coach Mario Cristobal has had in his six years. Senior Giancarlo Revilla moves from center to guard, and senior Caylin Hauptmann is an all-conference candidate at left tackle. Tackle Rupert Bryan Jr. is a returning starter on the right side.

Carroll's likely replacement, sophomore Jake Medlock, could almost be counted as a returning starter. He had two starts late in 2011 before going down with a shoulder injury.

Medlock went through the spring at less than 100 percent, but the shoulder should be completely healed by fall camp. He is more of a running threat in the new up-tempo spread offense than Carroll was in the past two years.

DEFENSE

The Panthers made big strides on defense in 2011, especially against the run, but had problems giving up big plays late in games. That doesn't figure to be an issue in 2012.

Overall, FIU has gotten bigger, stronger and more athletic across the board on defense, especially up front.

Defensive end Tourek Williams, linebacker Winston Fraser and safety Jonathan Cyprien all return after earning second-team All-Sun Belt honors.

Tackles Isame Faciane and Andre Pound, linebacker Jordan Hunt and cornerback Jose Cheeseborough should challenge for all-conference recognition this fall, as well.

Cornerback Sam Miller, who had three sacks and two interceptions in eight starts as a sophomore, is a rising star in the secondary.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Punter Josh Brisk boosted his average by nearly three yards a kick to 42.3 in 2011. He had a dozen punts of more than 50 yards, and fewer than half (24) of his 61 kicks were returned.

Kicker Jack Griffin showed his clutch ability when he booted the game-winning field goal as time expired in the 2010 Little Caesars Pizza Bowl against Toledo. He made 22 of 26 field-goal attempts last season and has made all 81 of his PAT tries over two years.

OVERVIEW

Cristobal's approach since taking over a penalty- and scandal-ridden team in 2007 has been to build a program, not just a team, and that should pay off with FIU's best year yet. Coming off an 8-5 season, the Panthers will go into 2012 looking to get at least a piece of their second Sun Belt title in the past three years.

TOP NEWCOMER

E.J. Hilliard: The true freshman enrolled early and competed in the spring with redshirt freshman Loranzo Hammonds for the backup spot behind starter Jake Medlock. He comes out of Miami's Northwestern High and can run as well as throw, making him a nice fit for FIU's up-tempo spread offense.

2012 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE					
QB	12	Jake Medlock	6-3	220	So.
RB	**9**	**Kedrick Rhodes***	**5-11**	**190**	**Jr.**
WR	**5**	**Wayne Times***	**5-11**	**188**	**Sr.**
WR	88	Jacob Younger	6-2	190	Sr.
WR	1	Willis Wright	6-1	196	Jr.
WR	**10**	**Glenn Coleman***	**6-2**	**205**	**Jr.**
LT	**71**	**Caylin Hauptmann***	**6-4**	**314**	**Sr.**
LG	**53**	**Giancarlo Revilla***	**6-2**	**280**	**Sr.**
C	**76**	**Shae Smith***	**6-3**	**280**	**Sr.**
RG	50	David Delsoin	6-6	298	Jr.
RT	**54**	**Rupert Bryan Jr.***	**6-2**	**270**	**Sr.**
DEFENSE					
DE	**97**	**Tourek Williams***	**6-4**	**255**	**Sr.**
DT	**75**	**Andre Pound***	**6-3**	**285**	**Sr.**
DT	**99**	**Isame Faciane***	**6-5**	**290**	**Jr.**
DE	55	Greg Hickman	6-1	274	Jr.
LB	**41**	**Kenny Dillard***	**6-0**	**220**	**Sr.**
LB	**34**	**Winston Fraser***	**6-2**	**226**	**Sr.**
LB	**25**	**Jordan Hunt***	**6-1**	**230**	**Sr.**
CB	**27**	**Jose Cheeseborough***	**5-9**	**176**	**Jr.**
CB	**39**	**Sam Miller***	**5-9**	**180**	**Jr.**
S	**25**	**Jonathan Cyprien***	**6-0**	**210**	**Sr.**
S	**23**	**Terrance Taylor***	**6-0**	**185**	**Jr.**
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	**38**	**Jack Griffin***	**6-1**	**203**	**Sr.**
P	**40**	**Josh Brisk***	**5-10**	**191**	**Sr.**

* Returning Starters in Bold

2012 SCHEDULE

Sept. 1	at Duke
Sept. 8	AKRON
Sept. 15	at UCF
Sept. 22	LOUISVILLE
Sept. 29	at Louisiana
Oct. 4	ARKANSAS STATE
Oct. 13	MIDDLE TENNESSEE
Oct. 20	at Troy
Oct. 27	WESTERN KENTUCKY
Nov. 3	at South Alabama
Nov. 16	at FAU
Nov. 24	ULM

2011 RESULTS

W	NORTH TEXAS	41-16
W	at Louisville	24-17
W	UCF	17-10
L	LOUISIANA	31-36
L	DUKE	27-31
W	at Akron	27-17
L	at Arkansas State	16-34
W	TROY (OT)	23-20
L	at Western Kentucky	9-10
W	FAU	41-7
W	at ULM	28-17
W	at Middle Tennesse	31-18
	Beef O'Brady's Bowl	
L	vs. Marshall	10-20

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	25.0	74
Rushing	145.6	72
Passing	214.9	70
Total	360.5	82
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	19.5	14
Rushing	118.1	22
Pass	226.6	65
Total	344.7	30
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+5	+0.38	30

LOUISIANA | RAGIN' CAJUNS

Sun Belt rank: 4 | Record: 9-4 | Sun Belt record: 6-2 (3rd) | Stadium: Cajun Field (31,000)

By Paul Borden

Photo by Derick E. Hingle-US PRESSWIRE

"We have the ability to put a lot of points on the board this fall if we take care of the ball."
— Coach Mark Hudspeth

RAGIN' CAJUNS at a GLANCE

COACH: Mark Hudspeth — At Louisiana: 9-4, 1 year; overall: 75-25, 8 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Jay Johnson
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Greg Stewart

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 1994, Big West
LAST TIME DIDN'T GO BOWLING: 2010
RETURNING STARTERS: 15; 9 offense, 4 defense, kicker, punter

PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Blaine Gautier, RB Alonzo Harris, WR Javone Lawson, WR Harry Peoples, RT Jaron Odom, ROV Le'Marcus Gibson, S Jemarlous Moten, P/PK Brett Baer

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: The Cajuns have depth at quarterback, with Houston transfer Terrance Broadway backing up returning starter Gautier, and have an experienced and deep receiving corps, as well. The offensive line returns four starters.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: Seven new starters must be found on defense, and though some of the candidates gained exposure last year, they still must prove themselves as front-line players. No starters return up front, and the secondary has holes to fill at both safety spots.

OFFENSE

With nine offensive starters back, including quarterback Blaine Gautier and the league's second-most productive receiver in Javone Lawson, Louisiana should have no trouble moving the football.

Gautier was the Sun Belt's most efficient passer in 2011, throwing for 23 touchdowns with only six interceptions. His favorite target was Lawson, who was one of three players in the conference with more than 1,000 yards in receptions. He had 1,092 yards on 63 catches.

Two other receivers, Harry Peoples and Darryl Surgent, are back as well. Peoples ranked sixth in the conference in receptions per game and seventh in yardage.

Alonzo Harris, who earned conference Newcomer of the Year honors after rushing for 700 yards as a freshman, will lead the ground attack.

The Cajuns welcome back four starters on the line, including Jaron Odom at tackle and Daniel Quave at guard, but they lose their stud tight end of the past four years, Ladarius Green. That's a position that won't be filled until late in fall camp.

DEFENSE

As much as the offense is filled with returning starters and big-play guys, the situation on the other side of the ball is just the opposite.

The Cajuns welcome back only four starters and must find replacements for, among others: end Bernard Smith, who was one of the league leaders in sacks (6.5) and tackles for loss (13); linebacker Lance Kelley, their leading tackler; and rover Devon Lewis-Buchanan, who also was in double figures in tackles for loss (10.5).

Jemarlous Moten, who tied Kelley and Dwight Bentley for the team lead in interceptions with three, and Melvin White (two picks) return at the corners, but the Cajuns will be looking for new safeties.

The other returning starters are rover Le'Marcus Gibson and linebacker Jake Molbert.

Despite the personnel losses, at least nine other players return on defense after having gained some experience in 2011, including linebacker Justin Anderson, who started in the New Orleans Bowl win over San Diego State.

Coaches also are hopeful that linebacker Delvin Jones, a junior college transfer, has his academics in order and will be eligible.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Brett Baer does double-duty for the Cajuns — actually triple, counting kickoffs — in handling placekicking and punting chores. He was 18 of 20 on field-goal attempts last season, including the game-decider from 50 yards as time ran out in the bowl victory.

Baer also averaged just more than 40 yards on 79 punts, downing 27 inside the opponent's 20-yard line. Opponents averaged less than five yards per return against him.

OVERVIEW

The Cajuns were a surprising contender for the conference title in 2011, but it won't be a shock if they challenge again. They have the offensive firepower and a rising star in the coaching business in Mark Hudspeth. The key will be building a defense that can come up with enough stops.

TOP NEWCOMER

DE Jalen Fields: Fields originally signed with Georgia and seemed destined to be a Bulldog after shoring up his academic credentials at Georgia Military Academy in the past two years. At 6-5, 280, Fields is expected to have an immediate impact on the Cajuns' defense.

2012 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE					
QB	**17**	**Blaine Gautier***	**6-0**	**212**	**Sr.**
RB	**46**	**Alonzo Harris***	**6-1**	**205**	**So.**
WR	**87**	**Darryl Surgent***	**6-0**	**195**	**Jr.**
WR	**4**	**Javone Lawson***	**6-1**	**183**	**Sr.**
WR	**9**	**Harry Peoples***	**5-10**	**180**	**Sr.**
TE	85	Ian Thompson	6-4	234	Jr.
LT	**72**	**Leonardo Bates***	**6-5**	**296**	**Sr.**
LG	70	Mykhael Quave	6-5	300	Fr.
C	**71**	**Andre Huval***	**6-2**	**305**	**Jr.**
RG	**67**	**Daniel Quave***	**6-3**	**324**	**So.**
RT	**76**	**Jaron Odom***	**6-7**	**330**	**Jr.**
DEFENSE					
DE	45	Emeka Onyenekwu	6-4	250	Sr.
NT	94	Justin Hamilton	6-3	330	So.
DT	93	Cordian Hagans	6-5	310	Sr.
LB	**59**	**Jake Molbert***	**6-1**	**220**	**So.**
LB	34	Justin Anderson	6-3	240	Jr.
BAN	52	Dominique Tovell	6-3	240	Fr.
CB	**22**	**Melvin White***	**6-3**	**191**	**Sr.**
CB	**2**	**Jemarlous Moten***	**5-11**	**175**	**Sr.**
ROV	**30**	**Le'Marcus Gibson***	**6-0**	**205**	**Sr.**
SS	11	Darius Barksdale	6-0	190	Jr.
FS	19	Rodney Gillis	5-11	186	Sr.
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	**40**	**Brett Baer***	**5-11**	**182**	**Sr.**
P	**40**	**Brett Baer***	**5-11**	**182**	**Sr.**

* Returning Starters in Bold

2012 SCHEDULE

Sept. 1	LAMAR
Sept. 8	at Troy
Sept. 15	at Oklahoma State
Sept. 29	FIU
Oct. 6	TULANE
Oct. 16	at North Texas
Oct. 23	ARKANSAS STATE
Nov. 3	at ULM
Nov. 10	at Florida
Nov. 17	WESTERN KENTUCKY
Nov. 24	SOUTH ALABAMA
Dec. 1	at FAU

2011 RESULTS

L	at Oklahoma State	34-61
W	at Kent State	20-12
W	NICHOLLS STATE	38-21
W	at FIU	36-31
W	FAU	37-34
W	TROY	31-17
W	NORTH TEXAS	30-10
L	at Western Kentucky	23-42
W	at Middle Tennesse	45-20
W	ULM	36-35
L	at Arkansas State	21-30
L	at Arizona	37-45
	New Orleans Bowl	
W	vs. San Diego State	32-30

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	32.3	32
Rushing	125.2	88
Passing	269.5	29
Total	394.6	51
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	29.9	84
Rushing	138.6	46
Pass	261.3	100
Total	399.9	75
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 0	+ 0.0	59

LOUISIANA-MONROE | WARHAWKS

Sun Belt rank: 3 Record: 4-8 Sun Belt record: 3-5 (6th) Stadium: Malone Stadium (30,427)

By Paul Borden

Photo by Steve Mitchell-US PRESSWIRE

Kolton Browning

"We're certainly a deeper football team than we have been over the past two years." — Coach Todd Berry

WARHAWKS at a GLANCE

COACH: Todd Berry — At ULM: 9-15, 2 years; overall: 38-75, 10 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Steve Farmer
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Troy Reffett

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2005
LAST BOWL: None
RETURNING STARTERS: 15; 9 offense, 5 defense, kicker

PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Kolton Browning, RB Jyruss Edwards, RB Centarius Donald, WR Brent Leonard, WR Tavarese Maye, DE Kentarius Caldwell, NT Gerrand Johnson, LB Austin Moss

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: The Warhawks have talent and depth at the skill positions, particularly at receiver, and should be able to put points on the board if everyone stays healthy. The offensive line is young but experienced and has some depth.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: The Warhawks have only one returning starter (Kentarius Caldwell) up front on defense, and he's moving back to end from the nose tackle spot he played in 2011. The secondary has good speed, but lacks experience.

OFFENSE

With a large contingent of experienced players at the skill positions, plus some veteran linemen returning, ULM has few issues on offense.

The experience starts at quarterback, where two-year starter Kolton Browning returns after throwing for nearly 207 yards per game and averaging another 37 on the ground last season.

His top four targets — receivers Brent Leonard, Tavarese Maye and Colby Harper, and running back Jyruss Edwards — are back. So too is Je'Ron Hamm, who emerged from the spring as a starter when the Warhawks go to a four-receiver set. Leonard had 69 catches, Maye 50 in 2011.

Edwards is a returning starter who rushed for 667 yards last season. He will be joined by Centarius Donald, who rushed for 414 yards in seven games before going out with a lower body injury.

In addition to the return of three starters (Joseph Treadwell, Ben Risenhoover and Jonathan Gill) on the line, ULM will have Josh Allen back at center. He played guard in 2011 but started eight games at center as a freshman in 2010.

A healthy Keavon Milton could make a big difference in the running game as a big blocking tight end.

DEFENSE

The Warhawks are deeper at linebacker than in recent years, so deep that senior R.J. Young, a returning starter slowed by injuries, found himself No. 2 on the depth chart behind newcomer Austin Moss coming out of the spring.

Senior linebacker Cameron Blakes is a returning starter, but DaCorris Ford was one of the surprises of the spring. Ford, a little-used backup over his career, came out ahead of expected starter Ray Stovall going into the fall.

The concerns are on the line and in the secondary.

Junior Kentarius Caldwell is the only returning starter in the three-man front, and he is moving from nose tackle back to end, where he played as a freshman. That move was made possible when Gerrand Johnson, a redshirt freshman, had a big spring.

The big losses are in the secondary. Darius Prelow, who had 77 tackles and four interceptions playing the "Hawk" position, a hybrid safety-linebacker, is gone along with two other starters.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Kicking was a big problem in 2011 and remains an area of concern.

Sophomore Justin Manton made just 6 of 14 field-goal attempts and was 2 of 10 from beyond 40 yards. He also had two kicks blocked.

Sophomore Conner Fryoux and redshirt freshman Caleb Gammel will compete for the punting job that became vacant when Aaron Munoz transferred after two years on the job. Fryoux averaged 37.8 yards on 11 punts last year.

OVERVIEW

The Warhawks are hoping their potential explosiveness on offense will make up for their disappointing run in the conference in 2011, when some saw them as contenders. If they find the answers on defense, they may live up to that promise in 2012.

TOP NEWCOMER

LB Austin Moss: Big things are expected of Moss, who spent last year at Navarro Junior College in Texas after beginning his collegiate career at Arkansas. He played in 11 games for the Razorbacks as a freshman in 2009. He immediately won a starting position for ULM in the spring.

2012 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE					
QB	15	**Kolton Browning***	6-1	198	Jr.
RB	7	**Jyruss Edwards***	5-11	196	Jr.
WR	18	**Brent Leonard***	6-2	185	Sr.
WR	13	**Colby Harper***	6-0	180	So.
WR	8	**Tavarese Maye***	6-0	173	Jr.
TE	80	**Keavon Milton***	6-4	288	Sr.
LT	65	**Joseph Treadwell***	6-5	305	So.
LG	77	**Ben Risenhoover***	6-2	283	So.
C	66	Josh Allen	6-3	299	Jr.
RG	56	**Jonathan Gill***	6-3	277	Sr.
RT	75	Demiere Burkett	6-2	295	So.
DEFENSE					
DE	91	**Kentarius Caldwell***	6-2	266	Jr.
NT	76	Gerrand Johnson	6-0	267	Fr.
DE	99	Joey Gautney	6-1	248	So.
LB	45	DaCorris Ford	6-1	226	Sr.
LB	44	Austin Moss	6-2	226	Jr.
LB	35	**Cameron Blakes***	6-1	230	Sr.
CB	9	Otis Peterson	5-11	163	Jr.
CB	27	**Vincent Eddie***	5-8	157	Jr.
S	25	**Isaiah Newsome***	5-11	198	Jr.
S	10	Cordero Smith	5-11	189	So.
S	31	Henry Mitchell	5-11	192	Sr.
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	17	**Justin Manton***	6-2	186	So.
P	24	Conner Fryoux	5-8	182	So.

* Returning Starters in Bold

2012 SCHEDULE

Sept. 8	at Arkansas
Sept. 15	at Auburn
Sept. 22	BAYLOR
Sept. 29	at Tulane
Oct. 6	at Middle Tennessee
Oct. 13	FAU
Oct. 20	at Western Kentucky
Oct. 27	SOUTH ALABAMA
Nov. 3	LOUISIANA
Nov. 8	at Arkansas State
Nov. 17	NORTH TEXAS
Nov. 24	at FIU

2011 RESULTS

L	at Florida State	0-34
W	GRAMBLING	35-7
L	at TCU	17-38
L	at Iowa	17-45
L	ARKANSAS STATE	19-24
W	at Troy	38-10
L	at North Texas	21-38
L	WESTERN KENTUCKY (OT)	28-31
L	at Louisiana	35-36
W	MIDDLE TENNESSE	42-14
L	FIU	17-28
W	at FAU	26-0

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	24.6	78
Rushing	153.0	65
Passing	237.6	58
Total	390.6	55
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	25.4	59
Rushing	100.0	8
Pass	226.2	63
Total	326.2	21
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
+ 3	+ 0.25	38

MIDDLE TENNESSEE | BLUE RAIDERS

Sun Belt rank: 8 Record: 2-10 Sun Belt record: 1-7 (8th) Stadium: Floyd Stadium (30,788)

By Paul Borden

Photo by Tim Heitman-US PRESSWIRE

"I don't know if you can put your finger on one particular area, but we have to become a more mentally and physically tougher team."
— Coach Rick Stockstill

BLUE RAIDERS at a GLANCE

COACH: Rick Stockstill — At Middle Tennessee and overall: 35-40, 6 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Buster Faulkner
DEFENSIVE COORDINATORS: Steve Ellis, Tyrone Nix

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2006, co-champs
LAST BOWL: 2010 season, GoDaddy.com
RETURNING STARTERS: 12; 6 offense, 6 defense

PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Logan Kilgore, RB Benny Cunningham, WR Tavarres Jefferson, WR Kyle Griswould, DE Omar McClendon, DT Kendall Dangerfield, DT Jimmy Staten, SS Jajuan Harley

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: The Blue Raiders have returning starters at quarterback, running back and receiver from a productive offense. The return of four starters on the defensive front, including a potential starting redshirt freshman, should lead to an improved run defense. The Raiders are particularly well-stocked at defensive end.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: Newcomers are going to have to step up right away on the offensive line if the Raiders are going to take advantage of their experience at the skill positions. The defense still has critical spots to fill at linebacker and in the secondary.

OFFENSE

Middle Tennessee welcomes back the quarterback from an offense that produced 401.1 yards per game last season.

Junior quarterback Logan Kilgore threw for 2,231 yards, while completing 58.6 percent of his passes. He will have his top receiver from last year in senior Tavarres Jefferson (51 receptions for 398 yards) and experienced hands in junior Kyle Griswould and senior Anthony Amos.

But the Blue Raiders need a receiver to stretch the field with big-play capability. They had only one pass play that covered more than 50 yards in 2011 — Reggie Whatley's 82-yard touchdown reception against Troy.

Senior Benny Cunningham (501 yards rushing in eight games) and junior William Pratcher (585) return at running back. Junior Drayton Calhoun, a transfer from LSU, will also push for time there.

Three new starters must be found on the line to go alongside returning starters Alex Stuart, a senior who moved from center to guard in the spring, and junior guard Josh Walker.

DEFENSE

The key addition on this side might be first-year assistant Tyrone Nix, who will make the defensive calls while serving as co-coordinator with Steve Ellis.

Nix, who spent the last four years at Ole Miss and also has had impressive stints at his alma mater, Southern Mississippi, and South Carolina, inherits six returning starters from a unit that gave up 36.8 points and 441.1 yards per game.

Four starters return up front, including all-conference candidate Omar McLendon at end, but Alexandro Antoine, a redshirt freshman, came out of the spring ahead of one of last year's defensive end starters, Jiajuan Fennell.

Tackles Kendall Dangerfield and Jimmy Staten also are returning starters in the front four.

The Raiders have to find answers at linebacker — where junior Roderic Blunt is the only returning starter — and in the secondary.

The lone returning starter at defensive back is junior cornerback Kenneth Gilstrap, but the Raiders have high hopes for Florida State transfer safety Jajuan Harley. He sat out last year but could contend for All-Sun Belt honors in 2012.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Carlos Lopez, a transfer from Carson-Newman, looks to take over kicking responsibilities. He was 15 of 21 on field-goal attempts in three years at Carson-Newman and is eligible immediately as a graduate senior.

OVERVIEW

If the defense improves, especially against the run, Middle Tennessee could challenge for a spot in the top half of the conference. The Blue Raiders must cut down on turnovers (15 interceptions, 13 lost fumbles in 2011) to keep from putting the defense in bad field position.

TOP NEWCOMER

SS Jajuan Harley: Harley sat out last year after transferring from Florida State. He played in eight games for the Seminoles as a sophomore in 2010 after appearing in 11 games as a freshman, when he also saw action on the kickoff return team.

2011 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE					
QB	**10**	**Logan Kilgore***	**6-3**	**185**	**Jr.**
RB	**2**	**Benny Cunningham***	**5-10**	**205**	**Sr.**
WR	80	Jamal Gray	6-0	194	Sr.
WR	9	Kyle Griswould	5-10	193	Jr.
WR	**3**	**Tavarres Jefferson***	**5-9**	**191**	**Sr.**
WR	**86**	**Anthony Amos***	**5-11**	**181**	**Sr.**
LT	73	Isaiah Anderson	6-4	266	So.
LG	**65**	**Alex Stuart***	**6-2**	**288**	**Sr.**
C	66	Micah James	6-3	320	Jr.
RG	**77**	**Josh Walker***	**6-5**	**305**	**Jr.**
RT	61	Jadareius Hamlin	6-2	268	Jr.
DEFENSE					
LE	**85**	**Omar McLendon***	**6-3**	**242**	**Sr.**
LT	**96**	**Kendall Dangerfield***	**6-2**	**276**	**Sr.**
RT	**90**	**Jimmy Staten***	**6-4**	**300**	**Jr.**
RE	45	Alexandro Antoine	6-1	238	Fr.
LB	35	Craig Allen	6-2	216	Jr.
LB	28	Christian Henry	6-0	221	So.
LB	**33**	**Roderic Blunt***	**6-0**	**226**	**Jr.**
LC	**18**	**Kenneth Gilstrap***	**5-9**	**175**	**Jr.**
RC	7	Khari Burke	5-8	185	So.
SS	36	Jajuan Harley	6-1	203	Jr.
FS	8	Sammy Seamster	6-1	194	Jr.
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	38	Carlos Lopez	5-10	208	Sr.
P	36	Josh Davis	5-10	213	Jr.

* Returning Starters in Bold

2012 SCHEDULE

Aug. 30	McNEESE STATE
Sept. 8	FAU
Sept. 15	at Memphis
Sept. 29	at Georgia Tech
Oct. 6	ULM
Oct. 13	at FIU
Oct. 20	at Mississippi State
Oct. 27	NORTH TEXAS
Nov. 1	at Western Kentucky
Nov. 17	at South Alabama
Nov. 24	TROY
Dec 1	at Arkansas State

2011 RESULTS

L	at Purdue	24-27
L	GEORGIA TECH	21-49
L	at Troy	35-38
W	MEMPHIS	38-31
L	WESTERN KENTUCKY (OT)	33-36
W	at FAU	38-14
L	LOUISIANA	20-45
L	at Tennessee	0-24
L	at ULM	14-42
L	ARKANSAS STATE	19-45
L	FIU	18-31
L	at North Texas	7-59

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	22.3	96
Rushing	146.8	69
Passing	254.3	37
Total	401.1	45

DEFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	36.8	110
Rushing	229.5	114
Pass	211.6	44
Total	441.1	103

TO MARGIN	PER GAME	RANK
- 8	- 0.67	100

SOUTH ALABAMA | JAGUARS

Sun Belt rank: 10 | Record: 6-4 (FCS) | Stadium: Ladd-Peebles Stadium (40,000)

By Tommy Hicks

Photo by John Albright / Icon SMI

Jake Johnson

"We've got to elevate our play. With that, I think there's been a heightened sense of urgency about what they do." — Coach Joey Jones

JAGUARS at a GLANCE

COACH: Joey Jones — At South Alabama: 23-4, 3 years; overall: 26-11, 4 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Robert Matthews
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Bill Clark

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: None
LAST BOWL: None
RETURNING STARTERS: 12; 4 offense, 7 defense, punter

PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB C.J. Bennett, RB Brandon Ross, WR T.J. Glover, TE Greg Hollinger, DE Pat Moore, LB Jake Johnson, LB Enrique Williams, CB Darrius Morrow

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: There is talent and depth at running back and linebacker. In general, the Jags are in good shape at the skill positions. The new offense should make them effective and create problems for opposing defenses.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: The offensive line, especially in a new scheme, must develop depth and handle its business. Likewise, the secondary, an area of emphasis the past two seasons, must also develop depth and make plays as the program adjusts to a new league.

OFFENSE

The Jaguars will have a completely different look this season with the hiring of Robert Matthews as offensive coordinator.

He put in a spread offense, employing a no-huddle, fast-paced approach similar to that used by Southern Miss and Oklahoma State, the previous two teams with which Matthews was associated.

The skill positions feature talent, but the success or failure of the USA offense will be predicated by the offensive line. Three starters must be replaced, but center Trey Clark and guard Melvin Meggs are back. Greg Hollinger has moved from wide receiver to tight end in the new offense and is a good fit.

C.J. Bennett will return at quarterback with Trey Fetner pushing for time. Running back is deep with Brandon Ross expected back after 18 months away, and Kendall Houston, Demetre Baker and J.J. Keels add depth.

At wide receiver, T.J. Glover, Bryant Lavender, Jereme' Jones and Corey Waldon are the top targets.

DEFENSE

Seven starters are back on a defense that is deep at linebacker and improved on the line and in the secondary. Coordinator Bill Clark's aggressive, attacking style has been a plus for the Jags in their first three seasons, and they are seeking to produce more sacks and pressure on the quarterback this year.

Jake Johnson leads a linebacker corps that also includes Enrique Williams and Clifton Crews as starters. The position has good depth, including Maleki Harris and Bryson James.

The secondary has been the central focus for improvement the past two seasons and there is talent and quickness there. Alabama transfer B.J. Scott leads the way at safety, with junior college transfer Darrius Morrow stepping in during spring drills to grab a cornerback slot.

Strong safety Charles Harris and cornerback Qudarius Ford will start, with Gabe Loper, Charles Watson and Jonathan Cameron getting playing time.

Up front, ends Pat Moore and Romelle Jones are keys to success, with Andy Dalgleish and Randon Carnathan anchoring things at tackle. Look for Alex Page, Anthony Taylor and Montavious Williams to be factors as well.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Placekicker Jordan Means is gone, but Michel Chapuseaux is ready to handle field goals and kickoffs. Scott Garber is back as the Jags' punter. Glover, Keels and Jones will share kickoff and punt return duties. All have good speed and instincts.

OVERALL

This is a key season for the fledgling program. It marks the final year of the Jags' two-year transition to Football Bowl Subdivision status (they aren't eligible to win the Sun Belt title, but their games count as conference games). And it is a season that features a 13-game schedule — three more than last season — and eight games against Sun Belt foes, giving the Jags a measuring stick of what's to come and how far the program has progressed.

TOP NEWCOMER

CB Darrius Morrow: The junior college transfer is not big, but he's aggressive, has excellent quickness and instincts, and plays big. He adds leadership and a touch of swagger to a secondary that needs someone to step forward.

2012 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE					
QB	**15**	**C.J. Bennett***	**6-0**	**205**	**So.**
RB	33	Demetre Baker	6-1	215	So.
WR	**8**	**Bryant Lavender***	**6-0**	**185**	**Jr.**
WR	24	T.J. Glover	5-9	170	So.
WR	11	Jereme' Jones	5-8	160	So.
TE	10	Greg Hollinger	6-4	225	Jr.
LT	57	Tremain Smith	6-4	305	Sr.
LG	72	Drew Dearman	6-3	310	So.
C	**70**	**Trey Clark***	**6-1**	**270**	**Sr.**
RG	**77**	**Melvin Meggs***	**6-3**	**300**	**So.**
RT	73	Shaun Artz	6-4	290	So.
DEFENSE					
DE	47	Pat Moore	6-3	235	Jr.
NT	98	Andy Dalgleish	6-2	275	Sr.
DT	**93**	**Randon Carnathan***	**6-1**	**280**	**Jr.**
DE	**90**	**Romelle Jones***	**6-2**	**275**	**Jr.**
LB	**25**	**Clifton Crews***	**6-3**	**220**	**Jr.**
LB	**42**	**Jake Johnson***	**6-1**	**230**	**Sr.**
LB	**28**	**Enrique Williams***	**6-0**	**235**	**Jr.**
CB	22	Qudarius Ford	5-7	165	So.
CB	4	Darrius Morrow	5-10	170	Jr.
SS	**21**	**Charles Harris***	**6-1**	**200**	**Sr.**
FS	**1**	**B.J. Scott***	**5-11**	**205**	**Sr.**
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	39	Michel Chapuseaux	5-8	185	Jr.
P	**40**	**Scott Garber***	**5-9**	**195**	**Jr.**

* Returning Starters in Bold

2012 SCHEDULE

Aug. 30	UTSA
Sept. 8	NICHOLLS STATE
Sept. 15	at NC State
Sept. 22	at Mississippi State
Sept. 29	TROY
Oct. 13	at Arkansas State
Oct. 20	FAU
Oct. 27	at ULM
Nov. 3	FIU
Nov. 10	at North Texas
Nov. 17	MIDDLE TENNESSEE
Nov. 24	at Louisiana
Dec. 1	at Hawaii

2011 RESULTS

W	WEST ALABAMA	20-10
W	LAMAR	30-8
L	at NC State	13-35
L	at Kent State	25-33
W	at Texas-San Antonio (2OT)	30-27
W	TENNESSEE-MARTIN	33-30
L	at Georgia State (2OT)	20-27
W	HENDERSON (ARK.) STATE	28-3
W	MISSISSIPPI VALLEY STATE	35-3
L	CAL POLY	10-41

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK*
Scoring	24.4	70
Rushing	154.6	56
Passing	172.2	91
Total	326.8	88
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	21.7	27
Rushing	142.7	41
Pass	167.0	10
Total	309.7	16
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
-4	-0.40	83

(*FCS team in 2011)

TROY | TROJANS

Sun Belt rank: 5 Record: 3-9 Sun Belt record: 2-6 (7th) Stadium: Veterans Memorial Stadium (30,000)

By Matt Lowe

Photo by Nelson Chenault-US PRESSWIRE

Corey Robinson

"He's really worked hard on protecting the ball this spring. I expect that to carry over to the fall." — Larry Blakeney on QB Corey Robinson

TROJANS at a GLANCE

COACH: Larry Blakeney — At Troy and overall: 164-91-1, 22 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Kenny Edenfield
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Jeremy Rowell

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2010
LAST BOWL: 2010, New Orleans
RETURNING STARTERS: 11; 6 offense, 5 defense

PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Corey Robinson, RB Shawn Southward, WR Eric Thomas, OL Kyle Wilborn, DE Tony Davis, LB Brannon Bryan, LB Kanorris Davis, S Brynden Trawick

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: Robinson is one of the top quarterbacks in the Sun Belt. Southward and D.J. Taylor are a potent one-two punch at tailback. The Trojans return nine of their top 10 pass-catchers, including Thomas, a great route runner. Tony Davis is a quality pass-rusher. Bryan, Kanorris Davis and Trawick are leaders and all-conference-type players.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: Troy must find replacements for All-Sun Belt tackle James Brown and center Zach Swindall. The running game is still an area of concern. The Trojans must replace three starters up front on defense, including pass-rush extraordinaire Jonathan Massaquoi. Depth at the cornerback position is thin. The kicking game is unproven.

OFFENSE

Corey Robinson begins his third season as the starting quarterback after completing 62.2 percent of his passes for 3,411 yards and 21 touchdowns a year ago.

The junior is well-versed in Troy's spread offense, but he needs to cut down on his 2011 interception total (15) to take his game to a higher level. Robinson worked hard on taking care of the football this spring.

Although the ground game, or lack thereof (Troy averaged just 88.7 ypg rushing), hurt the Trojans last year, don't be surprised to see that area improve significantly. Coach Larry Blakeney stressed being physical in the run game during the spring.

Seniors Shawn Southward, D.J. Taylor and Chris Anderson will spearhead Troy's ground attack, which will have some new wrinkles to it.

The receiver position is loaded with talent and experience, but Eric Thomas figures to be Robinson's top target. The 6-1 junior, who led the team in receptions (67) and yards (875) a year ago, is an all-conference player in the making.

Up front, guards Kyle Wilborn and Zach Johnson return, as does right tackle Terrence Jones.

DEFENSE

The Trojans will shift to a 3-4 look this season in an effort to get more speed on the field.

Tony Davis will be a starter at one end spot, but the battle for the starting tackle positions are still up for grabs.

Shermane TeArt and D.J. Johnson head into the fall as the top two candidates to man one tackle spot, while Kyle Lucas and John Clark are in a battle for the other tackle position. Junior college signee Xavier Melton (6-4, 305) will also be in the mix.

Jacoby Thomas, Kanorris Davis, Brannon Bryan and Dimitri Miles should combine to give the Trojans an athletic linebacking corps. Thomas is being counted on to man the new "Bandit" position in Troy's scheme, which should take advantage of his speed and quickness. Although he sat out the spring, Davis will be the team's nickel back. Bryan and Miles will be the two inside linebackers.

Brynden Trawick led the team in tackles (123) a season ago and is one of the Trojans' top playmakers on defense. He and Barry Valcin will man the two safety spots, while Bryan Willis and either Shaq Beverly or Ethan Davis will be the other starting corner.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Will Scott and Jed Solomon are in a battle to replace Michael Taylor at placekicker. Scott is also competing for the punter and kickoff specialist jobs.

Justin Albert will be the punt returner. Chandler Worthy and Bryan Holmes will handle kickoff returns.

OVERVIEW

Despite suffering through the worst year for a Troy team since 1982, Blakeney's crew should bounce back in a big way. Troy returns a wealth of experienced players on both sides of the ball, and the schedule isn't as daunting as it was a year ago.

TOP NEWCOMER

DT Xavier Melton: Melton's size (6-4, 305) and strength should be a welcome addition to a Troy defense that needs bulk up front in order to keep opposing offensive linemen off the team's speedy, athletic linebackers.

2012 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE					
QB	**6**	**Corey Robinson***	**6-2**	**209**	**Jr.**
RB	**20**	**Shawn Southward***	**5-9**	**192**	**Sr.**
WR	**3**	**Eric Thomas***	**6-1**	**209**	**Jr.**
WR	89	Chandler Worthy	5-9	159	So.
WR	83	Jaquon Robinson	5-11	188	Sr.
WR	1	Jamel Johnson	6-2	217	Jr.
LT	66	Jarred Fleming	6-5	281	Sr.
LG	**77**	**Kyle Wilborn***	**6-4**	**299**	**Sr.**
C	55	Andrew Phillips	6-3	328	Sr.
RG	**58**	**Zach Johnson***	**6-3**	**320**	**So.**
RT	**75**	**Terrence Jones***	**6-3**	**306**	**So.**
DEFENSE					
DE	**49**	**Tony Davis***	**6-0**	**249**	**Sr.**
DT	**91**	**Shermane TeArt***	**6-0**	**279**	**Jr.**
DT	93	Kyle Lucas	6-3	274	Sr.
BAN	56	Jacoby Thomas	5-11	248	Sr.
LB	9	Dimitri Miles	6-1	209	So.
LB	**42**	**Brannon Bryan***	**6-0**	**227**	**Sr.**
NB	44	Kanorris Davis	5-10	203	Sr.
CB	21	Shaq Beverly	5-8	200	Fr.
CB	**26**	**Bryan Willis***	**5-10**	**184**	**Sr.**
S	2	Barry Valcin	5-10	197	Sr.
S	**10**	**Brynden Trawick***	**6-2**	**221**	**Sr.**
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	4	Jed Solomon	5-7	152	Fr.
P	21	Will Scott	5-11	192	Jr.

* Returning Starters in Bold

2012 SCHEDULE

Sept. 1	at UAB
Sept. 8	LOUISIANA
Sept. 15	MISSISSIPPI STATE
Sept. 22	at North Texas
Sept. 29	at South Alabama
Oct. 11	WESTERN KENTUCKY
Oct. 20	FIU
Oct. 27	at FAU
Nov. 3	at Tennessee
Nov. 10	NAVY
Nov. 17	ARKANSAS STATE
Nov. 24	at Middle Tennessee

2011 RESULTS

L	at Clemson	19-43
L	at Arkansas	28-38
W	MIDDLE TENNESSE	38-35
W	UAB	24-23
L	at Louisiana	17-31
L	ULM	10-38
L	at FIU (OT)	20-23
L	at Navy	14-42
L	NORTH TEXAS	33-38
W	FAU	34-7
L	at Western Kentucky	18-41
L	at Arkansas State	14-45

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	22.4	94
Rushing	88.7	117
Passing	291.3	17
Total	380.0	65
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	33.7	101
Rushing	203.6	105
Pass	261.4	101
Total	465.0	113
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
-12	-1.00	114

WESTERN KENTUCKY | HILLTOPPERS

Sun Belt rank: 6 Record: 7-5 Sun Belt: 7-1 (2nd) Stadium: Houchens Industries-L.T. Smith Stadium (22,113)

By Chad Bishop

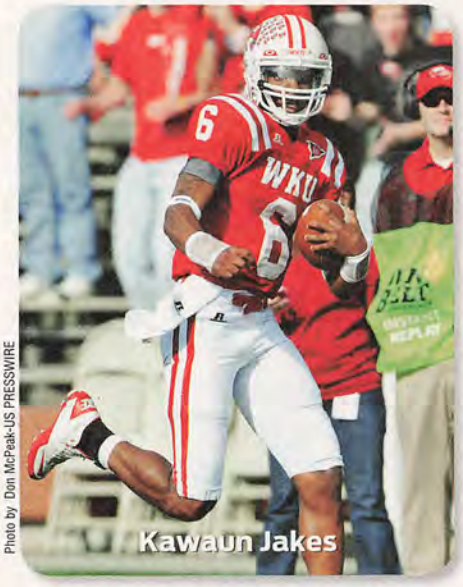


Photo by: Don McPeak-US PRESSWIRE

"What's our name?!" — Coach Willie Taggart, mocking the various ways Western Kentucky gets abbreviated on TV.

HILLTOPPERS at a GLANCE

COACH: Willie Taggart — At Western Kentucky and overall: 9-15, 2 years
OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Willie Taggart
DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Lance Guidry

LAST LEAGUE TITLE: 2002, Gateway Football Conference co-champs
LAST BOWL: None
RETURNING STARTERS: 16; 8 offense, 7 defense, punter

PLAYERS TO WATCH: QB Kawaun Jakes, RB Keshawn Simpson, TE Jack Doyle, LB Andrew Jackson, DB Jamal Forrest, DB Jonathan Dowling, DL Jamarcus Allen

PRIMARY STRENGTHS: The team's defense has plenty of potential with both a deep and talented linebacking corps and secondary. Not too many teams can also say they have a group of four tight ends that contributes regularly to the team's aerial assault.
POTENTIAL PROBLEMS: The Hilltoppers have three potential playmakers to replace record-setting RB Bobby Rainey. But if those three — Simpson, Antonio Andrews or John Evans — can't perform, WKU will be in trouble. Western Kentucky is a run-oriented offense that relies on play-action and time of possession. Forcing QB Jakes — who doesn't have a strong statistical history — to carry the offense is a risky proposition.

OFFENSE

It's the biggest question for Western Kentucky's offense — what will WKU do without record-setting running back Bobby Rainey?

Rainey set school records for rushing yards in a career and a single season in 2011 — but he's headed toward professional ball. The Hilltoppers look to run and run a lot in third-year coach Willie Taggart's West Coast offense, and how to replace Rainey (1,695 yards rushing, 361 receiving, 48 passing, 17 total TDs) is the overwhelming concern.

But what the Tops lack without Rainey, they make up for elsewhere. Senior quarterback Kawaun Jakes is entering his third year as a starter. Senior tight end Jack Doyle will be a John Mackey Award candidate. Four starting linemen are back.

The wide receiving corps is a concern with its youth and inexperience, but speedy Willie McNeal has made a full recovery from a 2011 knee injury and has emerged as the go-to guy. Rico Brown, Boe Brand and Tyler Higbee improved this spring and are expected to contribute.

As for running back, Keshawn Simpson, Antonio Andrews and John Evans made up a three-headed monster in the spring. If one emerges in the fall, as Taggart said he would like to happen, WKU should be fine on offense.

DEFENSE

Led by vicious-hitting middle linebacker Andrew Jackson and a talented secondary, WKU wants a unit that returns seven starters to dominate. The Tops ranked fourth in the Sun Belt in total defense in 2011. They enter their second season under defensive coordinator Lance Guidry.

The Hilltoppers have to replace productive ends Jared Clendenin and Bo Adebayo. Jamarcus Allen and Kenny Martin are back to clog up the inside, and WKU is looking at senior Cole Tischer and sophomore T.J. Smith — who moved from linebacker — to fill in at end.

Jackson led the team with 109 tackles in 2011 and said this spring he focused on becoming the quarterback of the defense. Starter Xavius Boyd will join him on the weak side, while Tye Golden and Bar'ee Boyd fight for the strongside spot. Kareem Peterson, Tyree Robinson and Florida transfer Jonathan Dowling lead a deep and talented secondary.

SPECIAL TEAMS

Punter Hendrix Brakefield, one of the top punters in the Sun Belt, also took turns at placekicker and tried his leg at kickoffs this spring, all while working on his hang time to get NFL-type numbers, according to coaches. Brakefield averaged 41.6 yards on 64 punts last season.

Jesse Roy was 2 of 6 on field-goal attempts and 17 of 20 on PATs in 2011. The sophomore will have to be better to stop what has been a revolving door at the position.

OVERVIEW

Taggart's Tops have laid the foundation — now they're looking to take the next step and introduce themselves to the nation. With renewed enthusiasm and fresh off a bowl-snubbed 7-5 season, WKU has ambitions of winning the Sun Belt Conference and making its first ever postseason bowl game as members of the FBS.

TOP NEWCOMER

DB Jonathan Dowling: Although he sat out in 2011 after transferring from Florida, Dowling turned heads all spring. "He's an exciting football player and the type of kid we need here in this program in order to continue to do what we're doing," said coach Willie Taggart.

2012 PROJECTED STARTERS

OFFENSE					
QB	6	**Kawaun Jakes***	6-3	198	Sr.
RB	34	Keshawn Simpson	6-0	240	Jr.
FB	32	**Kadeem Jones***	5-11	269	Jr.
TE	82	**Jack Doyle***	6-6	251	Sr.
WR	10	Willie McNeal	5-10	164	So.
WR	18	**Boe Brand***	6-0	158	So.
LT	60	Ed Hazelett	6-8	324	Jr.
LG	63	**Luis Polanco***	6-2	292	Jr.
C	65	**Sean Conway***	6-3	306	Jr.
RG	76	**Adam Smith***	6-5	322	Sr.
RT	75	**Seth White***	6-5	284	Sr.
DEFENSE					
DE	93	Quanterus Smith	6-5	251	Sr.
DT	43	**Jamarcus Allen***	5-11	290	Sr.
DT	95	**Kenny Martin***	6-0	281	Sr.
DE	45	Cole Tischer	6-4	254	Sr.
LB	12	Tye Golden	6-2	237	Sr.
LB	4	**Andrew Jackson***	6-1	262	Jr.
LB	13	**Xavius Boyd***	6-2	233	Jr.
CB	22	**Tyree Robinson***	5-10	198	Jr.
CB	8	Jamal Forrest	5-9	166	Jr.
SS	29	**Kiante Young***	5-11	224	Sr.
FS	14	**Kareem Peterson***	5-11	180	Sr.
SPECIAL TEAMS					
K	56	Jesse Roy	6-0	186	So.
P	99	**Hendrix Brakefield***	6-4	244	Jr.

* Returning Starters in Bold

2012 SCHEDULE

Sept. 1	AUSTIN PEAY
Sept. 8	at Alabama
Sept. 15	at Kentucky
Sept. 22	SOUTHERN MISS
Sept. 29	at Arkansas State
Oct. 11	at Troy
Oct. 20	ULM
Oct. 27	at FIU
Nov. 1	MIDDLE TENNESSEE
Nov. 10	FAU
Nov. 17	at Louisiana
Nov. 24	NORTH TEXAS

2011 RESULTS

L	KENTUCKY	3-14
L	NAVY	14-40
L	INDIANA STATE	16-44
L	ARKANSAS STATE	22-26
W	at Middle Tennesse	36-33
W	at FAU	20-0
W	LOUISIANA	42-23
W	at ULM	31-28
W	FIU	10-9
L	at LSU	9-42
W	at North Texas	31-21
W	TROY	41-18

2011 RANKINGS

OFFENSE	PER GAME	RANK
Scoring	22.9	89
Rushing	181.6	35
Passing	167.3	102
Total	348.9	89
DEFENSE	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
Scoring	24.8	55
Rushing	134.8	44
Pass	238.9	77
Total	373.8	53
TO MARGIN	**PER GAME**	**RANK**
-3	-0.25	82

SEC YEAR IN REVIEW

THE RACE

LSU's game at Alabama on Nov. 5 loomed in the preseason as the game of the year, and then the Tigers and Tide roared so loudly though the first two months of the season that the meeting could only be described in more grandiose terms: The Game of the Century.

The undefeated teams wrestled to a virtual standstill. Alabama landed some glancing blows, driving into LSU territory six times, but the end zone remained off limits, most frustratingly for the Tide when LSU safety Eric Reid stole the ball away from tight end Michael Williams at the 1-yard line.

Tied at 6 at the end of regulation, LSU's defense forced Alabama into a 52-yard field-goal attempt, which was way off target — the fourth Tide missed kick. Drew Alleman then gave the Tigers the victory with a 25-yard field goal.

LSU wouldn't clinch the powerful West, though, until the final day of the regular season, when it fell behind third-ranked Arkansas, 14-0, before shredding the Hogs, 41-17.

In the East, Georgia dropped its conference opener to South Carolina, but the Gamecocks' losses to Auburn and Arkansas opened the door. The Dawgs ran off seven consecutive league wins to clinch the division.

THE CHAMPION

LSU's preseason was troubled, with the news that offensive coordinator Steve Kragthorpe had to step down because of Parkinson's Disease, and an off-field incident at a nightclub that led to suspensions, including one for quarterback Jordan Jefferson.

When the season started, the Tigers started hitting feel-good notes, subduing Oregon 40-27 in Dallas in the first week. Tyrann Mathieu got his national rep as the Honey Badger. Quarterback Jarrett Lee thrived ... at least for a while. The defense intimidated.

LSU had a habit of falling behind by double-digits. Not that the Tigers much cared. It happened against Arkansas in the regular-season finale. It happened in the SEC title game against Georgia. LSU still won both games by a combined 56 points.

Ultimately, the deficit and the opponent — Alabama, again — in the BCS national championship game was too much, with the Tide winning, 21-0.

THE STARS

Offensive Player of the Year: Trent Richardson, RB, Alabama

The departure of Heisman winner Mark Ingram cleared a path for Richardson's stardom. The slashing junior carried 283 times — more than he had in his first two years combined — gaining 1,679 yards and scoring 24 total touchdowns en route to being a Heisman finalist.

Defensive Player of the Year: Morris Claiborne, DB, LSU

Claiborne won the Jim Thorpe Award as the nation's top defensive back, with one of his six interceptions coming in the regular-season meeting against Alabama. He was a leader on a defense that intercepted 18 passes and allowed opponents to complete just 52.4 percent of their passes.

Coach of the Year: Les Miles, LSU

Miles didn't add to his 2007 national championship, although the 13-0 regular season was a thing of beauty. He was true to himself throughout: Winning with a ground game, limiting mistakes, playing defense and never panicking.

THE BOWLS

The SEC owns college football's postseason. Of course, the six consecutive BCS championships for the league speaks to that, but so do the nine teams in bowl games (and they posted a 6-3 record last season). In the 14 years that the BCS has managed to stage a championship game, a team from the SEC has reached the title game in eight years, and has won the national championship every chance. (The only loss has been LSU falling to Alabama.)

BCS Championship	**Alabama 21, LSU 0**
Cotton	**Arkansas 29,** Kansas State 16
Outback	Michigan State 33, **Georgia 30**
Gator	**Florida 24,** Ohio State 17
Capital One	**South Carolina 30,** Nebraska 13
Chick-fil-A	**Auburn 43,** Virginia 34
Liberty	Cincinnati 31, **Vanderbilt 24**
Music City	**Mississippi State 23,** Wake Forest 17

ALL-SEC TEAM

*as selected by the league coaches

OFFENSE - First Team

QB	Tyler Wilson	Arkansas
RB	Trent Richardson	Alabama
RB	Michael Dyer	Auburn
WR	Jarius Wright	Arkansas
WR	Rueben Randle	LSU
TE	Orson Charles	Georgia
C	William Vlachos	Alabama
OL	Barrett Jones	Alabama
OL	Will Blackwell	LSU
OL	Cordy Glenn	Georgia
OL	Alex Hurst	LSU
AP	Joe Adams	Arkansas
AP	Chris Rainey	Florida
PK	Caleb Sturgis	Florida
RS	Joe Adams	Arkansas

DEFENSE - First Team

DL	Melvin Ingram	South Carolina
DL	Sam Montgomery	LSU
DL	Corey Lemonier	Auburn
DL	Jake Bequette	Arkansas
LB	Dont'a Hightower	Alabama
LB	Courtney Upshaw	Alabama
LB	Jarvis Jones	Georgia
DB	Mark Barron	Alabama
DB	Tyrann Mathieu	LSU
DB	Morris Claiborne	LSU
DB	Bacarri Rambo	Georgia
P	Steven Clark	Auburn

OFFENSE - Second Team

QB	Aaron Murray	Georgia
RB	Zac Stacy	Vanderbilt
RB	Spencer Ware	LSU
RB	Marcus Lattimore	South Carolina
WR	Da'Rick Rogers	Tennessee
WR	Marquis Maze	Alabama
TE	Philip Lutzenkirchen	Auburn
C	Ben Jones	Georgia
OL	Chance Warmack	Alabama
OL	Rokevious Watkins	South Carolina
OL	Brandon Mosley	Auburn
OL	Alvin Bailey	Arkansas
OL	Larry Warford	Kentucky
AP	Onterio McCalebb	Auburn
PK	Drew Alleman	LSU
RS	Marquis Maze	Alabama

DEFENSE - Second Team

DL	Tim Fugger	Vanderbilt
DL	Josh Chapman	Alabama
DL	Fletcher Cox	Mississippi State
DL	Jadeveon Clowney	South Carolina
DL	Malik Jackson	Tennessee
LB	Danny Trevathan	Kentucky
LB	Chris Marve	Vanderbilt
LB	Ryan Baker	LSU
LB	Jerry Franklin	Arkansas
DB	Winston Guy	Kentucky
DB	Casey Hayward	Vanderbilt
DB	Dre Kirkpatrick	Alabama
DB	Brandon Boykin	Georgia
P	Dylan Breeding	Arkansas
P	Brad Wing	LSU

THE STANDINGS

EASTERN

Team	W-L	PCT.	PF	PA	W-L	PCT	PF	PA
Georgia	7-1	.875	234	145	10-4	.714	448	288
South Carolina	6-2	.750	206	135	11-2	.846	391	239
Florida	3-5	.375	166	191	7-6	.538	331	264
Vanderbilt	2-6	.250	169	187	6-7	.462	347	281
Kentucky	2-6	.250	94	242	5-7	.417	190	296
Tennessee	1-7	.125	92	222	5-7	.417	244	271

WESTERN

Team	W-L	PCT.	PF	PA	W-L	PCT	PF	PA
LSU	8-0	1.000	280	67	13-1	.929	500	158
Alabama	7-1	.875	271	67	12-1	.923	453	106
Arkansas	6-2	.750	266	197	11-2	.846	478	289
Auburn	4-4	.500	160	246	8-5	.615	334	376
Mississippi State	2-6	.250	145	185	7-6	.538	329	256
Ole Miss	0-8	.000	93	292	2-10	.167	193	385

SOUTH FLORIDA BULLS

OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Todd Fitch | **DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR: Chris Cosh** | **STADIUM: Raymond James Stadium: 65,000**

AT A GLANCE

RECORD:
5-7 overall, 1-6 Big East (T-7th)

COACH:
Skip Holtz — At USF: 13-12, 2 years; overall: 85-62, 12 years

RETURNING STARTERS:
16; 7 offense, 7 defense, kicker, punter

PLAYERS TO WATCH:
QB B.J. Daniels, RB Demitris Murray, WR Victor Marc, WR Sterling Griffin, DE Ryne Giddins, LB DeDe Lattimore, LB Sam Barrington, CB Kayvon Webster

PRIMARY STRENGTHS:
No question, the heart of the South Florida defense is at linebacker, where three starters return. The pass rush again looks to be a plus. Even though only one starter returns, Holtz likes the depth at corner. The receiving corps should take a big step up with added depth, and the running backs have more big-play potential.

POTENTIAL PROBLEMS:
RB Darrell Scott's decision to enter the NFL Draft costs the Bulls a tough inside runner. Daniels at quarterback is a threat to run or pass, but he has missed games because of injuries in each of the past two seasons, and his backup wasn't determined in the spring. DT Cory Grissom could miss much of fall camp after breaking his ankle in the spring.

KEY LOSSES:
RB Darrell Scott, C Chaz Hine, DE Patrick Hampton, DT Keith McCaskill, CB Quenton Washington, S Jerrell Young

OVERVIEW:
The Bulls weren't all that far from a bowl trip last year, losing four games by three points each and another by six points. If their receivers come through, they should have a productive year on offense, and the veteran defense should have new life under first-year coordinator Chris Cosh. If they stay healthy, the Bulls can compete in the Big East.

Bulls Return Stingy Defense from Disappointing 2011

There is no getting around it. The 2011 season was a big — no, make that huge — disappointment for South Florida.

After beginning the year with a win at Notre Dame and going 4-0, the Bulls managed only one more win the rest of the way, at Syracuse. They failed to get to a bowl for the first time since 2004, their last year in Conference USA before joining the Big East.

There was one big loss, the first one, a 27-point thumping at Pittsburgh. But of the six defeats that followed, four were by three points, one by six and another by 10. So close, yet so far.

But as coach Skip Holtz sees it, 2012 offers a shot at redemption.

"Every season is a new book," Holtz said. "It's a whole new book we're writing, not a new chapter."

As the Bulls went through spring practice, Holtz said he could see renewed energy and determination among his players. A fire has been lit under them, he says, after the disappointment of a 5-7 record, the first losing year for the Bulls since 2004.

"The seniors have really kind of rallied behind (the notion of), that's not how we're going to do it," Holtz said. "That's not how we're going out."

He liked what he saw in the spring.

"There's some speed on this team," Holtz said. "They're physical, and they can run."

And they have experience. On the two-deep coming out of spring, 29 of the 44 players were seniors and juniors.

No fewer than 18 Bulls have started games, including quarterback B.J. Daniels (33 starts), defensive tackle Cory Grissom (28), safety Jon Lejiste (26), linebacker Sam Barrington (25), linebacker DeDe Lattimore (24), offensive tackle Mark Popek (21) and cornerback Kayvon Webster (21).

"I think we've got more experience than we've had since I've been here," Holtz said. "I'm excited about where we're going to be with our top 22.

"The thing that I'm trying to guard against is, where are our second 22? That's going to determine what kind of football team you're going to have."

OFFENSE

Quarterback B.J. Daniels heads the list of returnees on a unit that averaged some nice numbers. The Bulls rushed for 183.2 yards a game and passed for an average of 249.5.

But they had problems late in games, especially on third down, which undercut all the good they did moving the ball for 432.8 yards per game.

Correcting those critical-situation problems could come down to getting better and more consistent play from the wide receivers.

Junior Sterling Griffin, whose shoulder injury cost him nearly half the 2011 season, and speedy senior Victor Marc, are the only returning starters at wideout. But sophomores Andre Davis — who had three starts in 2011 — and Ruben Gonzalez both had outstanding springs. Davis finished his true freshman year strong, getting 13 of his 22 receptions over the last four games.

Junior Terrence Mitchell, a special-teams demon whose 2011 season was cut short by concussion issues, also should figure more prominently in the passing game. He showed speed with his play on special teams in 2010.

The Bulls lose leading rusher Darrell Scott, who powered his way to 814 yards in 11 games, but they still

look solid at running back. Demetris Murray, who started five games on his way to 503 rushing yards in 2011, is the likely starter and will be pushed by senior Lindsey Lamar and junior Marcus Shaw.

Lamar, who played wide receiver last year, has the kind of breakaway speed the Bulls' backs lacked last year. He has averaged more than 23 yards on kickoff returns in his career, and he ran back two for touchdowns two years ago.

Three starters return for the Bulls up front, including seniors Mark Popek at tackle and Danous Estenor at guard. Junior college transfer Lawrence Martin is a key addition in the middle.

DEFENSE

The big change on defense is new coordinator Chris Cosh, who spent the past three years at Kansas State. Cosh will have seven returning starters, including all three linebackers.

Seniors Sam Barrington and Michael Lanaris and junior DeDe Lattimore combined for 253 tackles, including 24 for loss and 10.5 sacks, and three fumble recoveries in leading a defense that yielded only 107.3 yards a game rushing in 2011.

In defensive end Ryne Giddins (11 tackles for loss, 5.5 sacks), the Bulls have the potential to once again be a force in harassing opposing quarterbacks. The Bulls' average of 3.2 sacks a game ranked fourth in the country.

Veteran tackle Cory Grissom broke his ankle in the spring but is expected to be ready for the opener, and sophomore Elkino Watson played in all 12 games up front as a freshman.

Seniors Kayvon Webster at one corner and Jon Lejiste at strong safety are the only returning starters in the secondary. A couple of junior college transfers, Fidel Montgomery and Joshua Brown, look to fill one of the corner spots, and junior JaQuez Jenkins has considerable experience, as well.

SPECIAL TEAMS

The Bulls welcome back both of their kickers, though only Maikon Bonani is assured of his job. Bonani has made 40 of 53 field-goal attempts in three years and is unchallenged going into fall camp.

Punter Justin Brockhaus-Kann struggled last year, averaging less than 38 yards an attempt. Redshirt freshman Mattias Ciabatti was No. 1 coming out of the spring. The three-way competition with sophomore Chris Veron will continue in the fall.

— Paul Borden

B.J. Daniels
Photo by Bruce L. Schwartzman

SCOUTING REPORT: Offense

2011 stats: 183.2 ypg rushing (1st Big East/31st NCAA), 249.5 passing (2nd/42nd), 432.8 total offense (2nd/30th), 29.2 ppg (3rd/48th)

POS	STARTER	YR.	COMMENT	BACKUP/KEY DEPTH
QB	B.J. Daniels*	Sr.	Staying healthy a priority in his senior season.	Bobby Eveld, Jr.
RB	Demetris Murray	Sr.	Has shown he can catch the ball as well as run.	Lindsey Lamar, Sr.
WR	Sterling Griffin*	Jr.	Staying injury-free is key to his year.	Andre Davis, So.
WR	Ruben Gonzalez	So.	Made a good impression with his play in the spring.	Stephen Bravo-Brown, Jr.
WR	Victor Marc*	Sr.	Can stretch the field with his speed.	Terrence Mitchell, Jr.
TE	Evan Landi*	Sr.	Converted quarterback has found a home.	Jake Carlton, So.
LT	Mark Popek*	Sr.	Has 21 career starts, with 12 coming in 2011.	Darrell Williams, So.
LG	Lawrence Martin	Jr.	Junior college transfer solidifies the middle of line.	Damien Edwards, Sr.
C	Austin Reiter	So.	Looking at his first season as a starter.	Thor Jozwiak, Fr.
RG	Danous Estenor*	Sr.	Ankle and knee injuries limited him in the spring.	Steven Jacques, Jr.
RT	Quinterrius Eatmon*	So.	Started 12 games as a redshirt freshman last year.	Max Lang, Fr.
K	Maikon Bonani*	Sr.	A steady veteran with a strong, accurate leg.	Mattias Ciabatti, Fr.

*Returning Starter

SCOUTING REPORT: Defense

2011 stats: 107.3 ypg rushing (4th in Big East/15th in NCAA), 244.0 passing (5th/83rd), 351.3 total defense (5th/39th), 22.7 ppg (4th/37th)

POS	STARTER	YR.	COMMENT	BACKUP/KEY DEPTH
DE	Ryne Giddins*	Jr.	Great pass rusher, but must eliminate foolish penalties.	Tevin Mims, Jr.
DT	Elkino Watson	So.	A record nine tackles for loss (one sack) as true freshman.	Todd Chandler, So.
DT	Cory Grissom*	Sr.	Has started 28 of 34 games in his career.	Luke Sager, Jr.
DE	Julius Forte	Jr.	Recorded three sacks as a backup in 2011.	Eric Lee, Fr.
LB	Sam Barrington*	Sr.	Returned interception for touchdown against UTEP.	Reshard Cliett, So.
LB	Michael Lanaris*	Sr.	Had 10 tackles and interception in win over Notre Dame.	Hans Louis, So.
LB	DeDe Lattimore*	Jr.	Led Bulls in tackles with 94 stops in 2011.	Mike Jeune, Sr.
CB	Kayvon Webster*	Sr.	A second-team All-Big East selection in 2011.	George Baker, Sr.
CB	Fidel Montgomery	Jr.	Junior college transfer had a big spring.	Joshua Brown, Jr.
SS	Jon Lejiste*	Sr.	One of two returning starters in the secondary.	JaQuez Jenkins, Jr.
FS	Mark Joyce	Jr.	Has one start in 25 career appearances.	Trevon Griffin, So.
P	Mattias Ciabatti	Fr.	Was a preferred walk-on as a placekicker.	Justin Brockhaus-Kann, Sr.*

*Returning Starter

A LOOK BACK

5 YEARS AGO: 2007

Glenn Dorsey

Photo by Bob Rosato/SI/Getty Images

In quite a year, LSU was amazingly resilient, becoming the first team to overcome two defeats to win the national championship. Remember, the Tigers' quarterback from the previous season (JaMarcus Russell) had left early to become the No. 1 pick in the NFL Draft, and by the end of the season, they were dealing with the distraction of reports that coach Les Miles had accepted the job at Michigan. But they hung in there, despite the triple-overtime loss at Kentucky and the remarkable 50-48 triple-OT loss against Arkansas. Everything else that needed to happen fell into place (including three teams above them losing in their last game, and the Tigers beating Tennessee in the SEC title game). By the time they got to New Orleans, nothing was going to faze this team.

SEC champion: LSU (12-2, 6-2) beat Tennessee (10-4, 6-2), 21-14.
SEC Players of the Year: Darren McFadden, RB, Arkansas; Glenn Dorsey, DT, LSU
Heisman Trophy: Tim Tebow, QB, Florida; McFadden was 2nd, Dorsey 9th.
National champion: LSU spotted Ohio State a 10-0 lead and then rolled to 31 consecutive points en route to a 38-24 victory, its second BCS title in five years.

10 YEARS AGO: 2002

The Dawgs and Hogs won their division championships in very different fashion — Georgia controlling the race in the powerful Eastern Division, while Arkansas scratched its way back in the mediocre West (where top team Alabama was on probation). Both champions called upon miracle finishes to pull out their clinching victories: David Greene's fourth-and-19 touchdown pass to Michael Johnson with 1:25 remaining lifted Georgia over Auburn, 24-21, and Arkansas needed Matt Jones to find DeCori Birmingham for a 31-yard score with nine seconds left to overcome LSU, 21-20.

SEC champion: Georgia (13-1, 7-1) drubbed Arkansas (9-5, 5-3), 30-3.
SEC Player of the Year: David Pollack, DE, Georgia
Heisman Trophy: Carson Palmer, QB, USC
National champion: Ohio State (14-0) shocked top-ranked Miami in the Fiesta Bowl, 31-24, in double overtime after a controversial pass interference penalty helped the Buckeyes at the end of the first overtime.

15 YEARS AGO: 1997

When Florida handled Tennessee on Sept. 20, it looked like the defending national champions were on their way to their sixth consecutive division title and fifth straight SEC crown ... until things went awry for coach Steve Spurrier and his Gators. Florida was shocked by LSU and Georgia, while the Vols just kept getting better, eventually capturing the East. Led by quarterback Peyton Manning, Tennessee then used a memorable comeback against Auburn to capture the SEC title, overcoming a 20-7 first-half deficit to win 30-29.

SEC champion: Tennessee (11-2, 7-1) edged Auburn (10-3, 6-2), 30-29.
SEC Player of the Year: Peyton Manning, QB, Tennessee
Heisman Trophy: Michigan CB-WR-RS Charles Woodson became the first predominantly defensive player to win the award, edging Manning in one of the closest and most surprising votes ever.
National champions: Michigan (12-0, AP poll) beat Washington State in the Rose Bowl, 21-16; Nebraska (13-0, Coaches poll) beat Tennessee in the Orange, 42-17.

20 YEARS AGO: 1992

The Crimson Tide of coach Gene Stallings had been overlooked all season in favor of 1991 national co-champions Washington and Miami. But all Alabama did was win. And once the Tide got the chance to face Florida in the first SEC Championship Game, it didn't miss a trick. They were even better in the national championship showdown with No. 1 Miami in the Sugar Bowl. Alabama did it mostly with defense, led by bookend defensive ends John Copeland and Eric Curry, and a secondary stocked with stars like Antonio Langham, Sam Shade and George Teague.

SEC champion: Alabama (13-0, 8-0) beat Florida (9-4, 6-2), 28-21.
SEC Player of the Year: Garrison Hearst, RB, Georgia
Heisman Trophy: Gino Torretta, QB, Miami; Hearst was 3rd; Curry 10th
National champion: Alabama won its seventh official national title by thrashing the heavily favored Hurricanes, 34-13. The Tide hammered Miami's Heisman Trophy winner and snapped the Canes' 29-game winning streak.

25 YEARS AGO: 1987

Auburn charged to the first of back-to-back SEC championships (making it three in a six-year period), with a sensational defense leading the way. Unbeaten in the SEC, the Tigers shut out Alabama, with All-Americans Aundray Bruce and Tracy Rocker at the forefront.

Wendell Davis

Photo by LSU/Collegiate Images/Getty Images

SEC champion: Auburn (9-1-2, 5-0-1)
SEC Player of the Year: Wendell Davis, WR, LSU
Heisman Trophy: Tim Brown, WR-RS, Notre Dame. Florida freshman RB Emmitt Smith was 9th.
National champion: No. 2 Miami (12-0) beat No. 1 Oklahoma in the winner-take-all Orange Bowl, 20-14.

50 YEARS AGO: 1962

This was a great year in the SEC, with one of John Vaught's great teams prevailing with a perfect record in a season when Alabama and LSU were ranked among college football's elite. The Rebels went 10-0 and for the third time in four years won somebody's version of the national championship (although not the AP or UPI coaches polls). They were overshadowed in early season rankings as Alabama and LSU were getting most of the attention in the SEC. By Nov. 3, the Rebels upset fourth-ranked LSU, and two weeks later, top-ranked Bama lost a 7-6 classic at Georgia Tech (when Joe Namath was intercepted four times, and Bear Bryant's late try for two went awry). Vaught's boys just kept winning, all part of a remarkable 64-7-4 stretch from 1957 to 1963.

SEC champion: Mississippi (10-0, 6-0)
SEC Player of the Year: Jerry Stovall, RB-DB, LSU
Heisman Trophy: Terry Baker, QB, Oregon State. Stovall was 2nd; Alabama C-LB Leroy Jordan was 4th.
National champion: No. 1 USC (11-0) beat No. 2 Wisconsin (8-1), 42-37, in the Rose Bowl.

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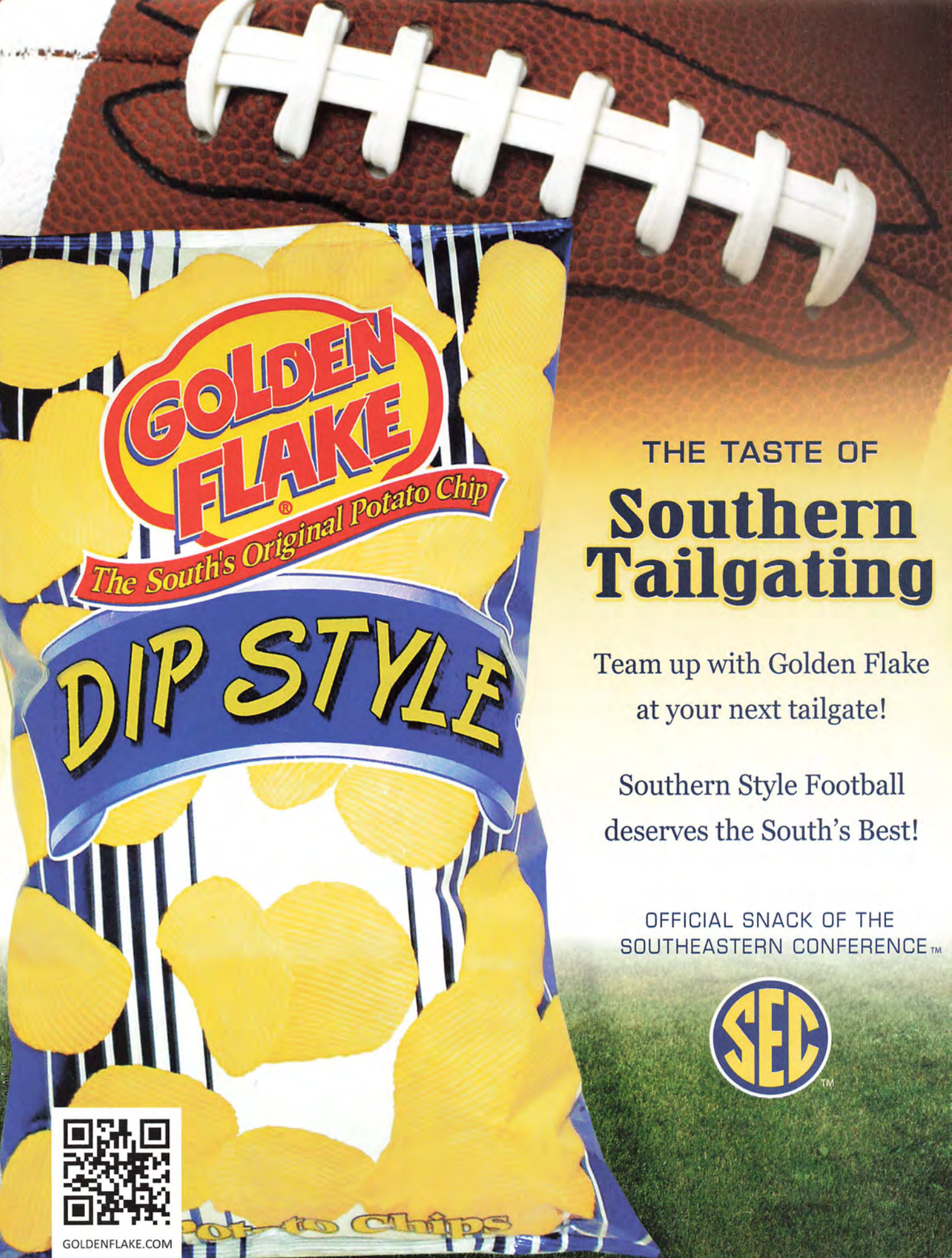

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